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FILIPINO MARTIAL CULTURE

MARK V. WILEY

Filipino Martial Culture

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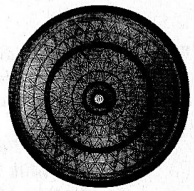
Filipino Martial Culture

Mark V. Wiley



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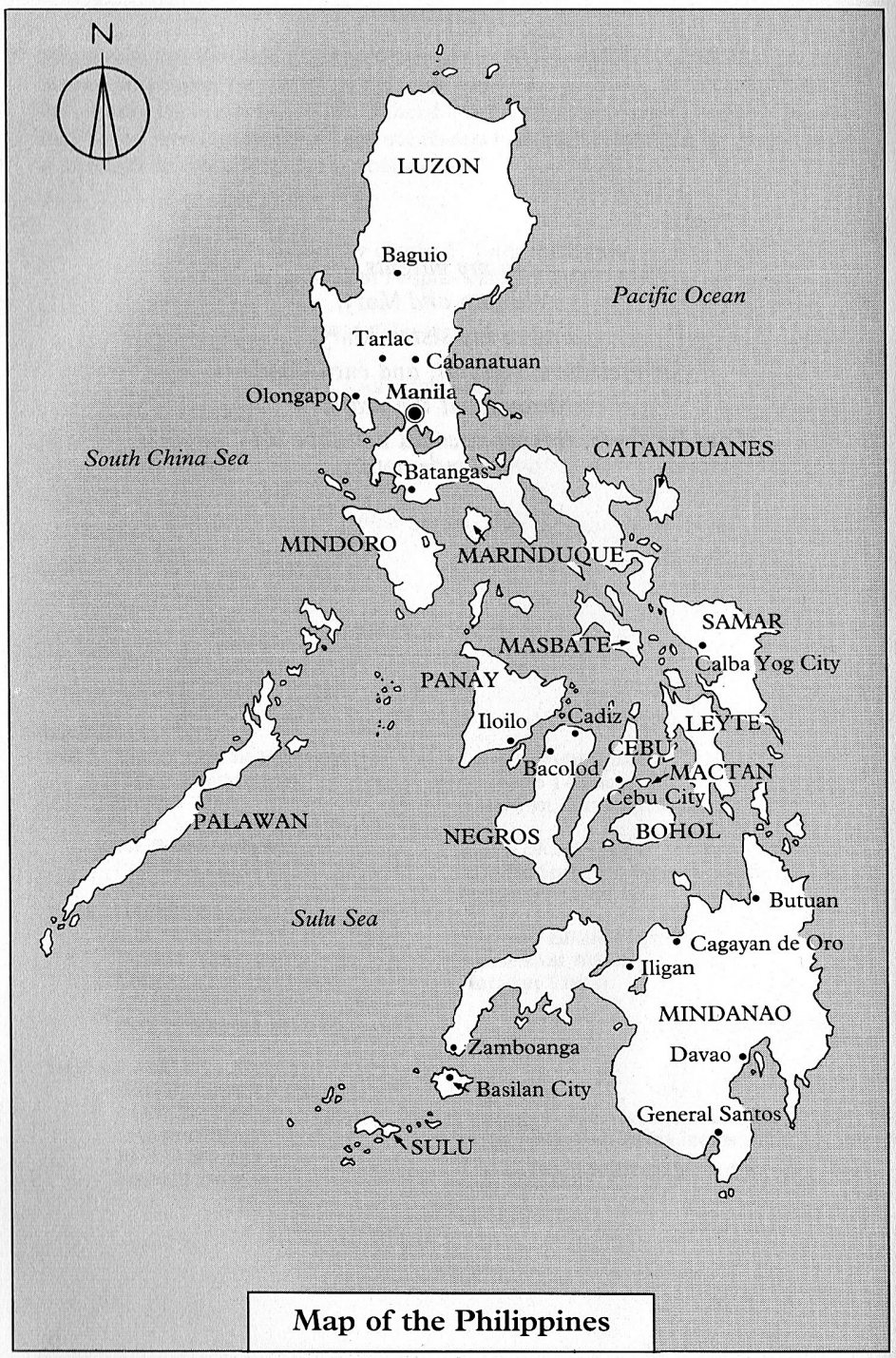
To my parents,
William *and* Mary,
and to my sister, Mary,
for their love, support, and encouragement
throughout the years.
If not for them, this work could not have been possible.



Map of the Philippines

Table of Contents

Foreword *by Michael Maliszewski, Ph.D.* 11

Author's Preface 13

PART ONE: **General Introduction**

1. Background Investigation 21
   - Introduction 21
   - Review of Literature 22
   - Research Methods 25
   - Spelling and Name Designations 26

PART TWO: **Historical Perspective**

2. The Prehistoric Era 31
   - An Island and Its People 31
   - Early Inhabitants 32
   - The Legend of Ten *Datus* 35
   - The Introduction of Islam 37
3. The Colonial Period 39
   - On the Shores of Mactan 39
   - A Spanish Colony 41
   - The Cry for Freedom 49
4. The Twentieth Century 53
   - American Intervention 53
   - Philippine Insurrection 54
   - World War II and After 56
   - Reemergence of a Warrior's Art 57

PART THREE: **Community, Culture, and Artifacts**

5. Ethos and Worldview of the Filipino Warrior 69
   - Introduction 69
   - Dimensions of the Physical Arts 70
   - Spiritual/Religious Ideology 72
   - Psychological Framework 80
6. Structure, Rites, and Symbols 84
   - Introduction 84
   - Social Structure, Status, and Titles 85
   - Sacred Time and Space 87
   - Rites of Passage, Liminality, and Communitas 90
   - Rites of Initiation and Status Elevation 94
   - Symbols, Metaphors, and Meaning 96
7. Folk Performance, Festivity, and Celebration 104
   - Introduction 104
   - Martial Folk Festival 105
   - Martial Folk Drama 109
   - Martial Folk Dance 111
8. Typology of Weapons 116
   - Introduction 116
   - Origin and Classification of Filipino Weapons 116
     - Slash and Thrust Weapons 118
     - Impact Weapons 125
     - Flexible Weapons 126
     - Projectile Weapons 126
     - Protectants 128
   - Weapons as Cultural Artifacts 132

PART FOUR: **Contemporary Masters and Martial Arts**

Introduction 137

9. Herminio Biñas *(Biñas Dynamic Arnis)* 140
10. Angel Cabales *(Cabales Serrada Escrima)* 148
11. Carlos Escorpizo *(Arnis Escorpizo)* 156
12. Ramiro Estalilla *(Rigonan-Estalilla Kabaroan)* 164
13. Ray Galang *(Hagibis)* 173
14. Meliton Geronimo *(Sikaran)* 182
15. Leo Giron *(Giron Arnis/Escrima)* 191
16. Antonio Ilustrisimo *(Kali Ilustrisimo)* 201

17. Carlito Lañada *(Kuntaw Lima-Lima)* 210
18. Porferio Lanada *(Arnis Lanada)* 217
19. Benjamin Luna Lema *(Lightning Scientific Arnis)* 228
20. Amante Mariñas *(Pananandata Mariñas)* 235
21. Christopher Ricketts *(Sagasa)* 245
22. Edgar Sulite *(Lameco Eskrima)* 254
23. Bobby Taboada *(Balintawak Arnis Cuentada)* 266
24. Sam Tendencia *(Tendencia Arnis-Hilot)* 276
25. Raymond Tobosa *(Tobosa Kali/Escrima)* 286
26. Florendo Visitacion *(Vee Arnis Jitsu)* 296

PART FIVE: **Summary and Conclusions**

27. The Classification and Ethos of Filipino Martial Traditions 307
    - Introduction 307
    - Classification of Filipino Martial Arts 309
      - The "Ancient" Systems 313
      - The "Classical" Systems 317
      - The "Modern" Systems 330
    - Ethos of Filipino Martial Culture 341

Appendixes:

1. Generic Terms for the Filipino Art of Weaponry 345
2. Styles of Filipino Fighting Techniques 346
3. Name Classifications of Filipino Martial Arts 347
4. Systems of Filipino Martial Arts 348

References Cited 349

Glossary 351

Bibliography 357

Index 365

Foreword

by Michael Maliszewski, Ph.D.
Department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School
Author, *Spiritual Dimensions of the Martial Arts*

The martial arts of Asia have emerged as a significant part of American culture today. It is difficult to find any individual who does not have some sense of familiarity with or recognition of these ancient disciplines when some reference is made to them. Following World War II, a number of servicemen who had been exposed to these esoteric practices endeavored to pass on their teachings to other Americans. Fueled by developments in media presentation, the growth of interest in martial arts—seldom even mentioned some forty years ago—has been phenomenal. Depiction of martial arts in films, popular magazines, and more recently, instructional videos, has led a small but growing group of scholars to research an area of study which has heretofore lacked critical analysis and understanding.

At this time, there exists only a handful of texts which most readers involved in the field will acknowledge to have had a significant effect on advancing our knowledge of the Asian combat disciplines. By and large, these classic works are single-handed efforts of isolated individuals traveling abroad to follow up second hand accounts and rumors of different martial arts practices. Their actual work involves interviewing teachers and practitioners, engaging in these practices themselves, and attempting to record their own observations and experiences to further elucidate incomplete explanations provided by predecessors, interviewers, and teachers.

While many writings have addressed the more familiar martial arts of China and Japan, until quite recently the martial arts of Southeast Asia

have been largely ignored by all but a small number of writers. A significant part of this is due to less interest generally displayed by the Asian scholars in this part of the world. However, perhaps a more important contributing factor is the difficulty investigating an area where written documentation is virtually nonexistent and verbal testimony is either highly guarded or suspect in terms of authenticity and accuracy. For this reason, this text is destined to become a classic reference source, and it fills a void that might never have been filled at all given the advanced age of its most renown practitioners.

This text is instrumental in significantly advancing our historical and contemporary knowledge of the Filipino martial arts, as well as ideology and ethos of the Filipino martial culture in general. With much of my own cross-cultural analysis of diverse martial disciplines, I have come to the conclusion that the Filipino martial arts might likely represent the most sophisticated disciplines in the use of weapons (empty hand against weapon, weapon against weapon), specifically with respect to the execution of movement as spontaneous, reflex action. In light of the significant historical events described in this book which led to the development of these martial arts practices, this is not surprising. Until now, however, most of this information was unknown. Even more ironic, most of the masters of the Filipino martial arts had contact earlier in their training with Chinese, Japanese, and Korean systems and, while integrating some of these teachings within their own practices, were able to maintain the unique style which characterized the Filipino martial arts. By contrast, few masters in countries outside of Southeast Asia have any knowledge of the Filipino martial practices and systems. In fact, recent demonstration of eskrima, arnis, and talahib-marga by the author in Japan before renown masters serving as guiding forces within several older, classical *ryu* (traditions) was met with surprise, enthusiasm, and acknowledgment of mastery as the principles of these arts was displayed in an unrehearsed fashion (true to the teaching principles of the Filipino martial arts instructors).

It is only by dedication to the pursuit of knowledge through practice, perseverance, and reflection that the role of the martial arts will be properly understood. This excellent work utilizes all available forms of inquiry and investigation to present to the reader a long overdue overview of the contributions of the Filipino culture to the martial arts in general. This work clearly established Mark V. Wiley as the world's foremost authority in the martial arts of the Philippines. It is my belief that the open-minded reader can significantly expand his or her own knowledge of the martial arts, in theory and actual practice, irrespective of their own particular systems or styles of training.

Author's Preface

In 1972, the late Donn F. Draeger wrote an exhaustive work titled *Weapons and Fighting Arts of the Indonesian Archipelago*. It soon became a classic and remains today among the most comprehensive volumes on the fighting arts of any given country. In 1974, Robert W. Smith wrote his anecdotal book, *Chinese Boxing: Masters and Methods*. Interesting and insightful, Smith's collection shed light on the lives and martial styles of a number of renown Chinese martial arts masters. These two books inspired and motivated me to write a text on the martial arts of the Philippines that would include both the historical and descriptive analysis of Draeger's work and the anecdotal life-histories of Smith's. In addition, I wanted this project to reflect my background in anthropology and sociology, but not be confined to cumbersome theoretical discourse. The chapters in Part Two and the book's conclusion, however, reflect the writing style and analytical methods of the social sciences proper. It is my hope, then, that this will generate an interest in other scholars to consider the subject of martial arts as a topic worthy of further investigation.

Dan Inosanto's *The Filipino Martial Arts* appeared in 1977. As the standard reference on the subject this text has had a significant impact on the Filipino martial arts community at large, and many practitioners who have written on the arts since have used it as their sole reference. Others have boldly plagiarized or paraphrased its historical presentation without further inquiry. Although informative, *The Filipino Martial Arts* is merely an introduction to these fascinating arts and their masters. Since the time of its printing, however, no one has conducted a study of the Filipino martial arts from a scholarly perspective nor has anyone attempted to validate many of the book's claims. It was this initial work by Inosanto that first exposed me to the practitioners and masters of the Filipino arts living in

the United States. His writing motivated me to seek out and meet these men and others. Without Inosanto's early pioneering research, thirst for knowledge, and his accounts of Filipino masters residing in the United States, I would not have had the opportunity to eventually meet, study under, and interview many of the masters presented herein.

Michael Maliszewski's "Meditative-Religious Traditions of Fighting Arts and Martial Ways," another classic in the field, together with the emergence of the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts,* in which it appeared, prompted me to take a closer look at previous documentation of Filipino martial culture. Douglas Wile's book, *Lost T'ai Chi Classics From the Late Ch'ing Dynasty,* motivated and inspired me, through its detailed analysis and scholarly presentation of research findings, to forge ahead and complete this manuscript during periods of mental fatigue and subject burnout.

The writing of this book, while difficult, has been rewarding. I gave my time and patience to the Filipino and his martial heritage out of a deep respect and a sincere wish to document, establish, and perpetuate the martial arts of the Philippines. To say the least, this work has been an exercise in perseverance. For example, on several occasions an interviewed master would suddenly withdrawal his support because he had learned that some other master was also due to be included in the book.

On a personal level, I decided to write this to satisfy my curiosity about just what it is that distinguishes Filipino martial culture from martial traditions that developed in other countries. To this end, I have attempted to uncover the more esoteric components of the Filipino martial arts, and to present the life-histories of the masters who perpetuate them, while maintaining a historical and cultural perspective throughout.

This work is divided into five parts, strategically ordered to lead smoothly and coherently from subject to subject. Terms or topics that appear in one chapter have already been introduced in a previous chapter, or are adequately defined and discussed therein.

Part One sets the stage by presenting a review of the literature on Filipino martial arts and martial culture, and outlines trends and misinformation on the topic. It also describes the research methods that were used to examine this information and construct a history and understanding of Filipino martial culture.

Part Two presents a brief history of the Philippines from prehistory through the twentieth century in relation to the evolution of its martial arts. Sources have been cited throughout these chapters because of the constant state of flux (due to the perpetual uncovering of new material) of historical research, particularly of the earliest time periods. Although the prehistory of the Philippines has been investigated by a number of respected Filipino scholars, their respective findings are, understandably, often contradictory; thus, the referencing of sources is necessary. Moreover, as Hurley so astutely put it: "No one can say where the strange, unwritten history of the Philippines began. The earliest peoples left no kindly records for the perusal of the scholar or the historically curious. They wrote their records in red, with *bolo* blades and wavy-edged *krises,* on the shining white beach. But the tides came, and the tropic rains, and washed the records away."[1]

Part Three focuses on the socio-cultural significance of the Filipino martial arts. Culture identifies a set of shared beliefs, actions, and activities among a given group of people. These individual elements of culture are not mutually exclusive but complementary. When each of these components are learned and shared by members of a society, they become known as cultural knowledge and cultural behavior.

Martial arts are systematic methods of hand-to-hand combat that developed over the centuries in various countries, and are at once supported by a code of honor and ethics. Thus, when we speak of martial culture we must include in our definition both cultural behaviors and cultural knowledge relevant to the study of martial arts in general, as well as their allied cultural expressions. Moreover, when discussing the specific martial culture of the Philippines we must focus on the specific behavior patterns and belief systems of the Filipino warrior.

In particular, this section explores the ethos and worldview of the Filipino warrior, discusses rites of passage, analyses symbols and metaphors, describes martial folk performance, and offers a description and typology of Filipino weapons. As a number of anthropological terms are used in which the reader may not be familiar, I have attempted to define them through explanation and description. Again, references are cited for those facts that are not considered to be "common knowledge." In analyzing this material I drew largely upon the classic theoretical works of noted symbolic anthropologist, Victor Turner, and historian of world religions, Mircea Eliade.

Part Four consists of biographical sketches of eighteen contemporary masters of Filipino martial arts. Chapters nine through twenty-six are written in narrative style. Chapter eleven, chapter seventeen, and chapter twenty-four, however, are presented in their original interview format as I felt a narrative would detract from these individuals' respective responses to the questions asked of them. This section provides an overview of the training and evolution of these contemporary masters' respective martial arts, and offers insight into the philosophical and conceptual bases which underlie their practices.

Part Five offers a summery and conclusion of the material presented herein, proposes a classification of Filipino martial arts, and compares and

contrasts the ethos of Filipino martial culture with that of India, China, and Japan.

It is the close connection between the Philippine islands and their martial inhabitants which embody the whole of Filipino martial arts as a subculture of the larger, encompassing Philippine Island identity. Martial arts show extreme variations in the Philippines. Indeed, even within a given region there is variation in martial practices. On the northern island of Luzon, for example, one can find weapon systems referred to as *kadaanan,* meaning "ancient" or "of the old," which embrace angular footwork and close range tactics; systems referred to as *kabaroan,* meaning "modern" or "of the new," which embrace linear footwork and long range tactics; stick-fighting systems known as *cinco tero,* which revolve solely around the use of five strikes; and various indigenous wrestling systems among the Igorot cultures.

Similar differences can be found within every major region of the Philippines. This variation is due primarily to the isolation of regional populations, which in times past has hindered diffusion of the arts. In addition, the desire of various practitioners of the arts to become respected as the founder of a system has led many masters to introduce new innovations which has spurred a number of collateral systems from a common root art. This has contributed to a variety of systematic and technical differences among and between Filipino martial arts in the three island regions, Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao. The proposed classification, then, groups the arts into "ancient," "classical," and "modern" systems based on sets of shared technical characteristics. To illustrate the classifications, step-by-step photographic depictions of fighting techniques from the systems of the masters are presented side-by-side.

My investigations suggest that as Asian martial arts in general have become more sophisticated, their techniques have become less effective in a strict martial sense, while becoming more "civilized" in the expressions of dance, drama, art, and sport competition. Moreover, although the contemporary Filipino warrior (i.e., the masters) attempt to emulate this "higher form" of martial culture, he is unable to fully assimilate it, relying more heavily upon the refinement of specific physical fighting techniques. It is hoped that this analysis will help the reader to better understand what makes the martial arts of the Philippines unique in contrast to other Asian martial arts, and how the Filipino arts have evolved and continue to do so in a post-modern Third World.

Please note that while the information presented here is comprehensive, it is not conclusive. The historical and cultural perspectives that are covered were selected on the basis of their relevance to the development of Filipino martial culture at large. Therefore, no treatment is given to political economy unless there was a direct relationship to the evolution of the Filipino martial traditions. In addition, the analysis and presentation of information contained herein is interpretive. The historical and socio-cultural basis upon which my arguments rest, and the way in which I chose to link the evolution of Filipino martial arts to the socio-political climate in the Philippines, reflect my own ethnocentric, compartmentalized worldview.

This text could not have been written without the assistance, guidance, and support of many individuals. At Drexel University, I thank Barbara Hornum for exposing me to the fundamentals of anthropological fieldwork, including the ethnographic interview, participant observation, and methods for documenting "questionable" information; Anthony P. Glascock for his comments and suggestions with respect to my analysis of ethos and worldview; David M. Kutzik for helping me with the statistical methods and their subsequent analysis which were used in support of the text's conclusion; and Douglas V. Porpora for his critique of my writing style and suggestions for obtaining "precision of thought" when attempting to articulate tacit knowledge. At the University of Pennsylvania, I thank Adria Katz for making available to me the University Museum's extensive collection of Philippine arms and armor. At Harvard Medical School, I thank Michael Maliszewski for his research guidance, suggestions in the overall presentation of material, and editorial help. At the University of the Philippines, I thank Felipe Jocano, Jr. for his help in sorting through the highly subjective material on Philippine prehistory, and for his enthusiastic support of this project.

I wish to extend my deep appreciation to Hugo Freund for helping me to better understand the socio-cultural significance of folk performance, and for his invaluable probing questions and suggestions with the general shaping of material after reading selected chapters of the first draft; to Meik Skoss for his comments and suggestions on improving the text after reading an edited draft; to Diane Skoss for her meticulous copy editing; to Michael A. DeMarco, editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts,* for his continued support, enthusiasm, and endorsement of my work, past and present; to Ray Galang, for sharing with me his knowledge, collection of photographs and books on Filipino martial culture, and for accompanying me on my first trip to the Philippines where I conducted much of the fieldwork for this text; to Christopher Ricketts and Alex Co for introducing me to various masters and practitioners of martial arts in the Philippines; to Oscar Ratti, for his enthusiastic support and wonderful paintings which highlight this text; and to Carlos Aldrete-Phan, for his friendship and support, and for creating the artwork for the book's cover.

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While writing this book I attempted to keep in mind the words of Joseph Pulitzer, who so eloquently stated: "Put it before them briefly so they will read it, clearly so they will appreciate it, picturesquely so they will remember it and, above all, accurately so they will be guided by its light." To this end, it is my hope that this initial survey of the martial arts and warrior culture of the Philippines will serve to stimulate further research and investigation in this relatively unexplored field.

Tokyo, Japan

PART ONE

General Introduction

1

Background Investigation

Documentary evidence, which had been generally considered as the most reliable source of informations, cannot always be held infallible, especially when the author is alien to places, idiosyncrasies, customs and traditions about which he wrote.

—ISIDRO E. ABETO

Introduction

Information on Filipino martial culture is at once insufficient, largely inaccurate, and virtually unavailable to the uninitiated. While the better known martial arts of China, Japan, and Korea are described in a wealth of published materials, there is simply nothing comparable on the Filipino arts. Furthermore, many books on the subject appear to have received insufficient media coverage, are of relative poor production quality, and consequently go out of print rather quickly. Of those that have remained in print, many contain inadequate and often inaccurate historical data.

Over the years I have had the opportunity to associate with many Filipino masters. In general, these men lack any appreciation of the value or purpose of documenting their life-histories or technical fighting concepts. As such, much of the documentation on the martial arts of the Philippines has been recorded only after being passed down through oral traditions. Although oral traditions do suffice in the absence or paucity of written documentation, they often lead to the formation of legends. Regrettably, this oral dissemination of knowledge has resulted in a number of authors

unknowingly perpetuating false information, as these stories are often taken at face value. Much of the information I found on Filipino martial culture was poorly researched. It has also been particularly interesting to discover two or more works boldly plagiarizing a given book—only to find later that their common source is inaccurate. The most reliable source material on the history and traditions of the Philippines can be found in anthropology, archaeology, and sociology texts and dissertations. The scholar has spent years unraveling the mysteries of traditional peoples, while the average martial artist spends most, if not all, of his time perfecting the physical components of the arts with little or no attention paid to the academic, philosophical, and spiritual dimensions. When "research" is attempted by the typical martial artist it is, sadly, often confined to perusing the popular martial arts magazines and books rather than scholarly sources.

Review of Literature

In attempting to define the ethos of Filipino martial culture several types of references were consulted: archaeological works dealing with Philippine prehistory; historical texts dealing with Filipino repression, rebellion, and warfare; anthropological writings offering cultural perspectives on spiritual/religious ideology and material culture; literature dealing with folk performance, festivity, and celebration; and books presenting information on Filipino martial arts proper in a system-descriptive sense.

In all, 175 books were used as source material for this work. Rather than present a critical review of each of these works, I have put together a bibliographic essay outlining specific trends in the documentation of Filipino martial culture in general. In the process of compiling this information, I have identified less than a half-dozen sources from which all other material has been derived.

In establishing the existence of a prehistoric martial culture in the Philippines the popular writers on Filipino martial arts (Draeger and Smith, Inosanto, Mariñas, and R. Presas) subscribe to the Beyer wave migration theory. Beyer's text, *Philippine and East Asian Archeology, and its Relation to the Origin of the Pacific Islands Population,* offered an orderly classification of indigenous Philippine natives into groups related to various migratory waves.[1] The classification of each wave was based on artifacts and customs found in given Philippine island regions that were also common to those of other Asian countries. Such classifications offered these writers the opportunity to structure a theory concerning the prehistoric existence of Filipino martial arts based on martial-culture contact with Indonesia, Malaysia, and China. However, in *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society,* Scott asserts that: "Since Beyer's

day, forty years of additional research have cast doubt on this synthesis . . . It is probably safe to say that no anthropologist accepts the Beyer wave migration theory today."[2]

Historically, the first text to mention Filipino martial arts is *Maragtas,* believed to have been written in A.D. 1250 by Datu Sumakwel. Sumakwel was a Bornean Sea Dyak who left his homeland with nine other *datus* (Muslim chieftains), and founded the Philippines' first Malayan settlement. The accounts documented in *Maragtas,* such as the establishment of the Bothoan school of martial arts and academia, has been referred to by a number of contemporary writers to support their claims about the origin of Filipino martial arts proper.[3] However, no original text, or even an ancient copy, of *Maragtas* has been found and such accounts must be considered suspect due to this conspicuous absence.[4] Scott further notes that the oft-cited *"Maragtas* is a copyrighted 1907 local history of Panay by Pedro Alcantara Monteclaro, which contains a legend which has carelessly been considered a pre-Hispanic document."[5]

The first book solely dedicated to the history and practice of Filipino martial arts was written in 1957 by Placido Yambao. The book, *Mga Karunungan sa Larung Arnis* (Knowledge in the Art of Arnis), was published in Tagalog by the University of the Philippines, and remains both the most obscure and the most paraphrased text on the subject. Yambao's book is important because it is not only the first major work on Filipino martial arts proper, but it is also the first to classify them as a single art, distinguishing the variety of Filipino martial arts by regional dialect alone and not by the technical characteristics of their physical movements. This misrepresentation of the arts, perhaps a result of the paucity of empirical data, was the source on which authors such as Cañete,[6] Draeger and Smith,[7] Haines,[8] Inosanto,[9] Mariñas,[10] E. Presas,[11] and R. Presas,[12] based their assertion that there is merely one martial art in the Philippines, with many names ascribed to it. However, current research indicates that there are over seventy technically unique Filipino martial arts being practiced today. (For a classification of these arts, *see* chap. 27).

A number of authors, such as Anima,[13] Campbell et al.,[14] Cañete,[15] Lema,[16] and Sulite,[17] have briefly documented the development of Filipino martial arts from the sixteenth-century Western discovery of the Philippines by Ferdinand Magellan. Proof of the existence of Filipino martial arts during this time is found in the events of the battle of Mactan on April 27, 1521. During this battle the native Filipino warriors while under the leadership of Rajah Lapulapu, used their indigenous martial arts to kill Magellan and defeat the Spanish conquistadors. This battle and the weapons employed by the Philippine natives are fully described in Antonio Pigafeta's *Magellan's Voyage: A Narrative Account of the First Circumnavigation.*[18] Pigafeta, the

official chronicler of Magellan's voyage, is the first writer to document the existence of a fighting art in the Philippines. Since he was unfamiliar with the fighting methods of the Visayan warriors, his account merely describes the weapons used and the strategy employed by the natives of Mactan, with no treatment given to the physical characteristics or classification of their martial art(s).

According to Dionisio Cañete, Don Baltazar Gonzales, in his book *De Los Delitos* (Of the Crimes), describes Lapulapu's martial art, pangamut, as consisting of six sword slashing maneuvers.[19] While in Manila in 1994, however, I interviewed Cañete and asked him if I could see Gonzales' text. Cañete intimated to me that he had not seen the book since he was a child, it was long out of print, and that no copies were to be found anywhere. The fact that Gonzales' text is missing and that Cañete, now fifty-eight years old, hasn't read it since he was a child, casts suspicion on this account of the name and characteristics of Lapulapu's sixteenth-century martial art.

Writings concerning the spiritual/religious ideology of Filipino martial culture are full of broad generalizations and lack system-specific classifications of beliefs correlated with physical practice. Those that do offer brief system-descriptions of divine intervention (such as belief in prayers and amulets) that accompany physical practice, are plagued by the problem of classifying all Filipino martial arts under one umbrella term. Such a classification ignores and discounts the variation between martial arts and religions that do in fact exist among the martial systems of the contemporary Filipino masters. However, given the paucity of research on the corporeal dimension of Filipino martial arts, and the syncretic nature of religion in the Philippines, it is easy to see how such generalizations are formed.

Many authors, such as Galang,[20] Jones,[21] and Mariñas[22] associate the possession of *anting-antings* (amulets) and the recitation of *orasyones* (prayers) to the Filipino martial arts in general. They list the various types of amulets and prayers, offer explanations as to their application, and give the reader examples of their effectiveness through the exploits of various culture-heroes and revered bandits *(tulisanes)*. These stories and explanations, however, can be traced to two main sources, Juan Galang's *Librito sa Orasyon* (Little Book of Prayers),[23] and Gregorio Luna's article "Amulets and the Animistic Filipino," in J. L. Luna's (ed.) *The Philippines: Pearl of the Orient.* [24]

Nid Anima has perhaps given the best overview of amulets and their connection to the Filipino warrior in his book *The Filipino Martial Arts*. In fact, Anima states, "The association of the *anting-anting,* the Filipino vernacular term for talisman or amulet, with martial arts seems inevitable, if indispensable."[25] At the turn of the century, Sir Francis St. Clair wrote of *anting-antings* in his book, *The Katipunan.* His book is based on official

Spanish documents and offers an illustrated historical and biographical study of the society Kataastaasang Kagalanggalang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan (The Exalted and Most Honorable Society of the Sons of the People—also known as the Katipunan), which brought about the Philippine insurrection of 1896–98. St. Clair asserts that "*anting-antings* constitute the remnants of what was once what might be called the religion of the peoples of the Philippines."[26] However, Anima warns against such a classification, when he states that "to associate the *anting-anting* with religion is somehow ridiculous and absurd."[27] Yet, to the uninitiated, such supernatural beliefs and practices are generally seen as being associated with religion proper, or, more specifically, with the anthropological tripartite classification of science, religion, and magic.

Research Methods

Clifford Geertz, a celebrated anthropologist and leading authority on Southeast Asian culture, suggests, in his book, *The Interpretation of Cultures,* that "societies, like lives, contain their own interpretations. One has only to learn how to gain access to them."[28] In gaining access to the martial culture of the Philippines I relied on personal interviews with key informants and the analysis of primary and secondary written sources. Further interpretation of these sources was based on eighteen years of participant observation as an active student and instructor of Asian martial arts in general, and as a master of several Filipino martial arts in particular. Between the years 1986–96 I traveled extensively throughout the United States to meet with Filipino masters who have relocated there. Two of them have since passed away (Raymond Tobosa and Angel Cabales). In 1994 and 1996, I traveled to the Philippines to collect primary source material, and to interview the masters who have remained there and who continue to teach Filipino martial arts in the land of their birth. This fieldwork gave me the opportunity to meet with twenty-five Filipino masters. It is these individuals who collectively embody the ethos of Filipino martial culture.

An interesting counterpoint to studying the culture of Filipino martial arts, as opposed to that of an isolated Philippine ethnic group, is that martial arts practitioners are not confined to a single-site community. The practice of martial arts is a nation-wide phenomenon. The "society" of martial arts practitioners is not fixed, but evolving. In gaining access to the various forms of Filipino martial culture, I did not follow any particular research format. Rather, I have attempted to interpret this discipline through its five overt forms: living heritage (the students, teachers, and masters of Filipino martial arts); written documentation (books, journal articles, magazine articles, and doctoral dissertations); cultural artifacts (weapons and

amulets); folk performance (festival, drama, and dance); and physical culture (the various martial arts systems). It was the practicality of participant observation, however, that acted as the mechanism through which these research findings were interpreted, analyzed, and synthesized into this text.

To compliment the largely qualitative nature of this book I relied upon methods of quantitative analysis (i.e., correlations and component analysis) in determining the classification of Filipino martial arts as presented in chapter twenty-seven. The scholar interested in the statistical analysis of this study is directed to the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts* (vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 20-39).

While the history of the Philippines is a perplexing puzzle that even the most respected scholars have yet to untangle, the history and evolution of its martial culture is even further shrouded in ambiguity. Since many contemporary authors on the topic have little or no training in practical and generally accepted research methods, a good deal of misinformation is recorded and perpetuated through referencing inferior, non-scholarly works. The history of the Filipino martial arts is replete with gaps, confusing, and often contradictory facts. However, as Abeto notes, "There are facts that are true and there are facts that are false. Facts in history that are considered as true, had been proven out of bounds by ocular findings and direct inquiry research."[30] Until now, such findings and direct inquiry into the history, origin, and evolution of the Filipino martial traditions has not occurred.

Spelling and Name Designations

For the specialist seeking to be accurate in language usage, style of romanization, and spelling of terms used in the text, I have used the standard Tagalog romanizations for words as available. With few exceptions, I have attempted to maintain a consistency in word spellings. The spelling of eskrima, for example, can be confusing as it is spelled a number of ways throughout the text. Much of this variation (and confusion) stems from the derivation of the word within different martial systems. For example, the use of the letter "g" (i.e., esgrima), is found in spellings derived from Spanish sources; the use of the letter "c" (i.e., escrima), is an improper acquisition and assimilation of the term into the Tagalog language spoken during the Spanish occupation of the Philippines; the spelling with a "k" (i.e., eskrima), has become the accepted romanization of the term based on the current Tagalog alphabet, which replaces the letter "c" with the letter "k" (i.e., there is no letter "c" in the Tagalog alphabet). Within the body of the text overall, I have decided to use the spelling eskrima in order to maintain continuity. However, I have chosen to maintain the spelling of the term as it appears within the name of a specific school or style, to preserve the identity and integrity of the different traditions.

The terms eskrima and arnis are particularly problematic and I've developed a system for their use throughout the text. In a contemporary setting, these terms have become interchangeable. They were both coined during the Spanish occupation of the Philippines. However, within the historical and cultural sections of the text I use the term eskrima to identify the classical Filipino fencing forms that were practiced during the Spanish colonial period. Conversely, since arnis is the most widely used name for the martial arts in the Philippines today, and the one that the Philippine government has chosen for its national organization (i.e., Arnis Philippines), I use the term to identify the modern Filipino stick-fighting arts practiced and observed in the post-Spanish Philippines. This was done to limit any confusion that may result from the modern interchangeability of these two terms, when making reference to the arts during specific time periods.

The term kali is used within the body of the text to identify the pre-Hispanic martial arts of the southern Philippines. There is no historical or anthropological evidence supporting the actual existence of an Islamic martial art by this name in Southeast Asia. In fact, it appears that the term itself is an acronym for a method of unarmed combat and has little to do with the Moros of Mindanao and Sulu with whom the term is generally associated. In addition, many practitioners claim that kali is simply another name for silat. This, too, is incorrect as silat places more emphasis on unarmed combat, while kali (as it is often defined) refers to armed combat with bladed weapons. However, in the interests of simplicity, the term kali is used herein to identify the Islamic martial arts of the southern Philippines that show a shift in focus from the empty hand to bladed weapons. (A detailed discussion of the origin and use of the term in reference to Filipino martial arts appears in chap. 27)

PART TWO

Historical Perspective

2

The Prehistoric Era

There is a wisdom of the past to which primitive man is close, and from which modern man can learn the requisites of his survival.

—CHARLES LINDBERGH

An Island and Its People

Since prehistoric times many names have been ascribed to the Philippine Archipelago. Of special interest is the assumption of Pedro A. Paterno that this Pacific island-chain was the ancient country of Ophir—the place where King Solomon acquired much of his gold.[1] Captain Juan Martinez, while under the command of Miguel Lopez de Legaspi, assumed that the Philippines was the island cluster of Maniolas—as described by the Greek geographer, Claudius Ptolemy, in his book *Geographia.*[2] Although this assumption was also maintained by other scholars such as Paterno[3] and Bantug,[4] Zaide asserts that these names "are more geographical fantasies than historical facts."[5] However, upon his arrival to the Philippines in 1521, Ferdinand Magellan christened the islands Archipelago de San Lazaro (the Islands of Saint Lazarus), as he stumbled upon them on the feast day of this Christian saint. It wasn't until the mid sixteenth century that Fray Ruy Lopez de Villalobos renamed the archipelago *Las Felipiñas* (the Philippines), after then crown prince Phillip II of Spain.

Filipinos are racial cousins of the present-day Indonesians, Malaysians, and Polynesians, and are divided into various ethnic groups: the Tagalogs, Ilokanos, Pampangueños, Pangasinans, and Bicolanos, all centered on the

island of Luzon; the Cebuanos and Ilongos of the island cluster known as the Visayas; and the Waray-waray of the Visayas, Leyte, and Samar. In addition, there are the Muslim Maranao of Mindanao and Palawan; the Muslim Maguindanao of Mindanao; and three Muslim tribes of the Sulu Archipelago–the Tausug, Samal, and Badjao. Furthermore, a number of smaller ethnic groups inhabit the interior of the islands, including the Ifugao, Igorots, and Kalinga of Luzon; the Bukidnon, Manobo, and Tiruray of Mindanao; and the T'boli of Mindanao's Cotabato region.

Early Inhabitants

The archaeological record indicates that approximately 500,000 years ago ice caps and glaciers in the earth's polar regions emerged, causing sea levels to rise. When the waters finally receded, land-bridges emerged and linked the Asian mainland to distant islands, including the Philippines. After examining hydrographic charts showing the depths of surrounding Southeast Asian waters, William Henry Scott concluded that the Philippines was indeed once connected to the Asian mainland via two now-sunken land-bridges.[6] These charts indicated that the depth of water separation between Palawan and Borneo does not exceed 100 meters, and the Straight of Malacca only reaches fifty meters at one point. Scott contrasts this with the fact that the Sulu Sea between Palawan and the Sulu Archipelago has depths reaching 5.5 kilometers (3.4 miles). One such land-bridge is said to have connected Palawan with Borneo for at least 40,000 years. From the Asian mainland, man and animals are believed to have crossed over to the Philippines on the land-bridge connecting Formosa (Taiwan) and Luzon, northern Philippines.

Among Philippine anthropologists and prehistorians, two opposing hypotheses have emerged to explain the peopling of the Philippines and the cultural evolution of its inhabitants. In the 1940s, H. Otley Beyer constructed the wave migration theory, which postulates a series of arrivals on the archipelago by different types and levels of cultures, each more advanced than their predecessors. Thus, it is believed that from 25,000 to 30,000 B.C., the Aeta (Negrito), a short, dark-skinned, kinky-haired Pygmy, hailing from central Asia, traveled to the Philippines by foot by way of the land-bridges. The Aeta is purported to have brought to the archipelago skills in the use of the blow-gun and the bow and arrow. Their cultural traits are represented today by the highlanders of Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao.[7]

Beyer labeled the next two groups or waves of people arriving in the Philippines as Indonesians A and B. It is believed that their culture was more advanced, thus pushing the Aeta into the highland or mountain regions. Indonesian A were subsequently forced inland by Indonesian B who came to occupy the lowland coastal settlements. These waves of Indonesians are believed to have occurred from 5,000 to 3,500 B.C., and to have introduced to the Philippines the honed-edge weapons of the stone dagger, stone-tipped spear, and the hand-held shield. Their cultural traits are found today among the Kalingas, Gadang, Isnegs, Mangyans, Tagbanuas, Manobos, Madays, Subanuns, and Samals.[8]

Finally, two-hundred B.C. through the mid-fifteenth century saw three successive waves of Malays arriving in the Philippines. The first Malays brought metal daggers, swords, and spears. These head-hunting Malays became the ancestors of the Bontok Igorot, Ilongot, and Tingguisan peoples of northern Luzon. The second migratory wave spanned approximately thirteen centuries (100 B.C.–A.D. 1400) and was responsible for introducing the ancient Visayan Baybayin alphabet to the Philippines. Francisco suggests that the Baybayin alphabet (also known as Alibata and Abakada) was brought to the archipelago by the Hindu Tamil by way of Malaysia around A.D. 200.[9] The third wave of Malays are believed to have been headed by the ten Bornean *datus* who settled on Panay, and became the ancestors of the Tagalogs and Visayans (more on this later).

There are three major problems with this theory: 1) it presupposes that prior to the arrival of the Aetas, the Philippines was an uninhabited and barren land; 2) the inherent racist assumption that smaller, darker people came first and that later "waves" of Indonesians and Malays were more advanced than their predecessors; and 3) there is a lack of specific archaeological evidence to support the contention that the peoples, their cultures, and their artifacts were as Beyer depicted.

As a result, Beyer's wave migration theory has been seriously questioned by anthropologists and Philippine prehistorians. In expressing the view of these scholars, Tan notes: "The geographic distribution of the ethnolinguistic groups, which allows for overlapping of otherwise similar racial strains in both upland and lowland cultures or coastal and inland communities, suggests a random and unstructured advent of different kinds of groups in the archipelago."[10]

Archaeologists at the Philippine's National Museum have noted some 100 sights in the Kalinga, Tabuk, and Cagayan Valleys that contain stone tools possibly dating back almost 500,000 years.[11] These man-made tools were made from river pebble, cobble, and flake and are believed to have been used for hunting and gathering. Such tools might reasonably be associated with a species similar to Java man and Peking man known as Homo erectus. However, a study by Shulter and Mathisen, titled "Pleistocene Studies in Cagayan Valley of Northern Luzon, Philippines," presents no conclusive evidence that these tools can be reasonably ascribed to the species Homo

erectus.[12] That Cagayan man's bones have yet to be found further complicates the classification of the finds.

The 1962 archaeological findings of a woman's skullcap, hip bone, and the fossilized remains of bats and birds at Tabon cave in Lipuun Point, Palawan, can, therefore, be considered the oldest and only positively identifiable remains of Homo sapien, or modern man, in the Philippines. Carbon-dated at approximately 22,000 B.C., the remnants of the Tabon cave dweller have been associated with the species known as Austroloid.[13]

With this in mind, F. Landa Jocano asserts that "to say that Filipinos are Malays or that Filipino culture is derived from the Malays is to create a myth of origin which has no basis in fact. It is doubtful whether one can safely recognize Malay characteristics . . . in the Tabon fossil men. To reason otherwise is to disregard the fossil evidence . . . which antedate all modern movements of men in the region."[14]

In the 1970s, Jocano constructed another hypothesis to explain the emergence of divergent cultural groups and patterns in the Philippines. Based on geological records, which give proof that what has become known as the Philippines was once part of the Asian mainland, and archaeological records which suggest artifacts to be older than Beyer proposed, Jocano believes that there were already people in the Philippines prior to Beyer's proposed dates. Moreover, he suggests that after the splintering of the Asian mainland into the Southeast Asian archipelagos, rather than peoples coming to the Philippines in waves and transplanting their culture in whole, Indonesians, Malays, and Chinese island-hopped across it on their way to trading posts in other countries. Since their sea travel was dependent on the changes of the winds, they would make settlement in the Philippines for a period of time, thus effecting changes in the local culture.

Thus, Jocano notes that during the end of the Incipient period (500 B.C.–A.D. 900), about the turn of the Millennium A.D., Filipino contacts with the outside world became intensified. The major impetus being a relatively efficient maritime transportation.[15]

The Srivijayan empire, which was established in southern Sumatra in the 600s, became the most powerful commercial power in Southeast Asia. From this trading post, ancient commercial relations with India and China, and later the Middle East were regulated. In 1293 Srivijaya was succeeded by the Madjapahit empire. During this time, Philippine-Indonesian relations intensified, and much of the so-called Indian cultural influences reached the Philippines.

Intensified culture-contact led to changes in Philippine prehistoric community life, including specialization of labor, and a stratified social organization (political, economic, religious, etc.). There developed a need to protect the land that a given group had claimed as their own through

farming and taming of animals. As a result, the development of crude combatives implementing the empty hands and various hunting tools began to surface.

Philippine-Chinese contacts intensified during the Tang dynasty (618–906), and peaked around the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries. It is believed that the Chinese introduced their fighting arts of kun-tao to the royal Filipino families at this time as a gesture of good faith to strengthen trade relations. The practice of kun-tao has been maintained among the Samal Tausug, where it is now known as *langka-kuntaw*. In addition, in 977 the Philippine island of Mindoro (known as Mai in Chinese), was known as a place of hospitality to Chinese traders and merchants. The majority of Chinese in the Philippines today are settled on Luzon.

Although we can neither prove nor disprove the actual progression of the peopling of the Philippines, we do know that the archipelago had extensive prehistoric contact with Indonesia, Malaysia, and China. It follows, then, that there is not a single-source from which Filipino martial arts developed, but at least three. Therefore, we must view the "ancient" Filipino martial arts as artifacts of a time and place. While they may have had common origins, differences evolved over time as a result of changing environmental conditions and the cultural experiences of the inhabitants in three island regions, Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao.

The Legend of Ten Datus

Legends of the thirteenth century, as recorded in *Maragtas* (a written history of Panay), maintain that ten Dyak *datus* (Muslim chieftains) fled their homeland of Borneo—running from the cruel Sultan Makatunaw (a sultan was the highest religious and political authority), who had seized their property and ravaged their wives—and settled on Panay Island. On their arrival Datu Puti, the leader of the ten and Makatunaw's former prime minister, bartered with the Aeta chieftain, Datu Marikudo, for the purchase of Panay's lowlands to effect the establishment of a peaceful Borneo-Malay settlement. The area in question was actually the Aeta Sinugbuhan settlement and so Marikudo told the Borneans that he would have to first consult the village elders and that the new-comers should await his return. The elders were in favor of selling the land because it was at once too large to farm alone and void of *kaingin* (trees and shrubs which were burned to fertilize the soil). The Aetas (Atis) agreed to sell the land for a mere gold headdress, gold necklace, and gold basin. The culmination of this agreement included a celebration feast where the Aetas performed the *sinulog* (martial dance), and celebrated the Ati-Ati (martial festival).

Although the land was bountiful, the *datus* chose instead to settle at the

mouth of the river at Malandog, since fish were plentiful there. After settling their village, Datu Puti decided to return to Borneo to fight Sultan Makatunaw, and was never heard from again. Before his departure, Datu Puti appointed Datu Sumakwel as the chief of Malandog. These Borneo-Malays became the ancestors of the Visayan Filipinos. Datu Domangsil and Datu Balensuela, whom Datu Puti dropped off along one of the rivers, became the ancestors of the Tagalog Filipinos. After a number of marriages between the children of the seven remaining *datus* and the newly arrived Borneans who had killed Sultan Makatunaw, Panay was divided into three districts.

In 1250, the ten *datus* established the Confederation of Madyaas with Datu Sumakwel as its ruler. This confederation regulated the three districts of Panay—with Datu Sumakwel as ruler of Hamtik (Antique), Datu Bangkaya as the chief of Aklan (Capiz), and Datu Paiborong heading Irong-Irong (Iloilo). The remaining *datus,* namely, Paduhinogan, Lubay, Dumangsil, and Domalogdog aided Sumakwel's governing of the confederation. Sumakwel ruled this confederation through his Penal Code which was outlined in his book *Maragtas.* Known as the Maragtas Code, these are the oldest body of laws believed to have existed in the Philippines. The Code was said to have maintained peace on Panay by calling for the amputation of a thief's fingers, and by allowing more than one wife only to those men who could equally support several families. Above all, it penalized the lazy man.

Other confederations established in the Philippines were the Sugbu (Cebu) Confederacy, which was under the rule of Rajah (king) Tupas, and the Confederacy of Manilad (Manila), which was ruled by Rajah Sulayman. Rajah Sulayman's confederacy was extremely powerful and ruled the kingdoms of central Luzon.

In general, peaceful relations existed between the various *barangays* (small villages). Many enjoyed the use of free trade, travel, and intermarriages. However, it was not uncommon for one *barangay* to wage war on another. Zaide notes several reasons why this might happen: when an Indian goes to another village and is there put to death without cause; when their wives are stolen from them; and when they go in a friendly manner to any village and there, under the appearance of friendship, are wronged or maltreated.[16] To prepare themselves for such occasions, the Bornean *datus* were said to have established the Bothoan, a legendary school where future tribal leaders of Panay were taught the skills of weaponry together with academics.

Although many have written about *Maragtas* and its contents, these accounts are suspect by virtue of the conspicuous absence of the original text. In fact, a number of scholars have proven *Maragtas* to be nothing more than a contemporary writing being passed-off as an historical document. However, since this legend is the generally accepted history of Panay, this central Philippine island can be considered the place where the Filipino art of kali, the techniques of which are structured around the use of the *kalis* sword (also phonetically spelled *keris* and *kris),* were originally structured and developed. From early childhood, the Bornean inhabitants of Panay were said to have learned the art of weaponry, which included the blowgun *(sumpit),* bow and arrow *(busog at pana),* spear *(sibat),* daggers *(balaraw),* serpentine-shaped swords *(kris),* leaf-shaped swords *(barong),* and long, dual-pointed swords *(kampilan).* These warriors were also trained to carry hand-held circular shields *(taming)* and make and wear various sorts of armor *(pakil)* made of carabao hides, cotton, knotted hemp, and woven rattan. At that time, the art of kali was probably indistinguishable from its Indonesian and Malaysian silat precursors.

The Introduction of Islam

Along with the transplantation of Malaysian martial arts came their practitioner's Islamic religion. The Muslim religion may have filtered into the Sulu Archipelago and Mindanao as early as the thirteenth-century. In the Philippines early evidence of an Islamic presence is furnished by a tombstone of a trader-missionary, in Indanan, Sulu. It bears the inscription "710 AH," using the Islamic dating system, which, in relation to the Christian calendar, is approximately 1270 A.D.[17] By 1380 Islam had spread throughout Mindanao and Sulu.

What may have been a typical encounter between Muslims and the native populace is preserved in Maguindanao tradition. The tradition says that Sharif (high priest) Kabungsuwan, a nobleman from Johore, Malaysia, set out on a sea voyage with a large number of followers. Once out on the open sea, strong winds scattered boats, sails, and men in all directions. He incidentally landed on Sulu and brought the religion to the native Samals. The people then went to the leader Tabuwanay and recounted the events to him. Tabuwanay and his companion, Mamalu, went down to see the Malay chieftain. Sharif Kabungsuwan beckoned them to approach and board his boat. Tabuwanay sent Mamalu to gather all the men of Maguindanao. After the arrival of the men, Tabuwanay invited the *sharif* to Maguindanao. But Sharif Kabungsuwan refused to step foot on land unless all the men embraced Islam. This condition was accepted. Everyone came together, were washed, and became Muslims. Aside from his success in Maguindanao, Sharif Kabungsuwan also converted to Islam natives from Matampay, Slangan, Simway, and Kapitan. Sultanates were then developed and controlled under the laws of various Muslim Malay princes.[18]

Through the efforts of the trader, Sharif ul-Hasim Abubakr, Islam took deep roots in Sulu in 1450. Abubakr initially settled in Bwansa where he lived with its king, Rajah Baginda. Here Abubakr converted Baginda to Islam, married his daughter, Paramisuli, and established Islam as the official religion of Sulu.[19] After successfully uniting all the islands which comprise the Sulu Archipelago, as well as Basilan, Borneo and North Borneo, Abubakr established himself as Sultan.[20] A hierarchical society was established with *datus* at the head of each village. The Muslim Malay immigrants excelled in trade and the construction and use of arms and armor. The Moros (as they were named by the Spanish) went on to control most of the southern Philippine Islands. Their warriors sailed in *vintas* (dugout canoes with large sails) robbing people from neighboring islands and mainland Asia. Islam spread through the Philippines but had barely established a foothold in the northern islands when the Spanish arrived in 1521.

3

The Colonial Period

The voice of every people is the sword
that guards them,
or the sword that beats them down.
—ALFRED TENNYSON

On the Shores of Mactan

In 1800, Don Baltazar Gonzales wrote *De Los Delitos* (Of the Crimes). In this book Gonzalez credits Datu Mangal with bringing the art of kali to Mactan Island, and Sri Bataugong and his son *Sri* Bantug Lamay, with later bringing the art to the island of Cebu.[1] Through constant struggle and wars with neighboring islands, Mangal's son, Rajah Lapulapu (a.k.a., Tanday Lupalupa) developed a fighting system called pangamut. According to Gonzales, pangamut consisted of six slashes (i.e., to the head, chest, and kidneys—both left and right sides), and two thrusts (i.e., to the face and abdominal region). In the sixteenth century Lapulapu and Rajah Humabon, the son of Sri Bantug Lumay, began to quarrel. Tensions were rising and battle was imminent when Lapulapu accused Humabon of wrongfully taking land that belonged to his father. This battle, however, never occurred as the Philippines was unexpectedly visited by the trading vessels of Spain.

The Spanish methods of employing the rapier and dagger was taken to the Philippines in 1521 by way of the ships of the Portuguese explorer, Ferdinand Magellan. Magellan, sailing under the flag of Spain, was in search of a westward route across the Pacific, but was killed soon after his arrival in the Philippines at the battle of Mactan. Antonio Pigafeta, the historian who chronicled Magellan's voyage, wrote a rather detailed ac-

Rajah Lapulapu

count of this battle in his text, *Magellan's Voyage.*[2] Although this account is frequently cited in presentations of the history of Filipino martial arts, it is significant enough to offer a brief summary.

On Saturday, March 17, 1521, Ferdinand Magellan's ship came across an archipelago unknown to the Western world. He docked off the coast of what is now known as the island of Samar. On March 18, he made the acquaintance of Rajah Kolambu, the chief of Samar, as well as Rajah Humabon, the chief of Cebu. He converted them to Catholicism and a short-lived Spanish allegiance. Rajah Humabon, anxious to take advantage of this new situation, convinced Magellan to agree to conquer Mactan Island on April 26, and offer it to the Rajah as a token of friendship. Armed with their *kampilan* (long, dual-pointed cutlass), *sibat* (spears), *sinugba sa apoy* (sticks hardened in fire), and *kalasag* (protective shields), Lapulapu's *mandirigma* (warriors) repelled these invaders, killing Magellan in the low tide that forced him into a hand-to-hand battle instead of a ship-based bombardment of the island. Pigafeta described the battle that followed:

"Our large pieces of artillery which were in the ships could not help us, because they were firing at too long range, so that we continued to retreat for more than a good crossbow flight from the shore, still fighting, and in water up to our knees. And they followed us, hurling poisoned arrows four and six times; while, recognizing the captain, they turned toward him inasmuch as twice they hurled arrows very close to his head. But as a good captain and a knight he still stood fast with some others, fighting thus for more than an hour. And as he refused to retire further, an Indian threw a bamboo lance in his face, and the captain immediately killed him with his lance, leaving it in his body. Then, trying to lay his hand on his sword, he could draw it out but halfway, because of a wound from a bamboo lance

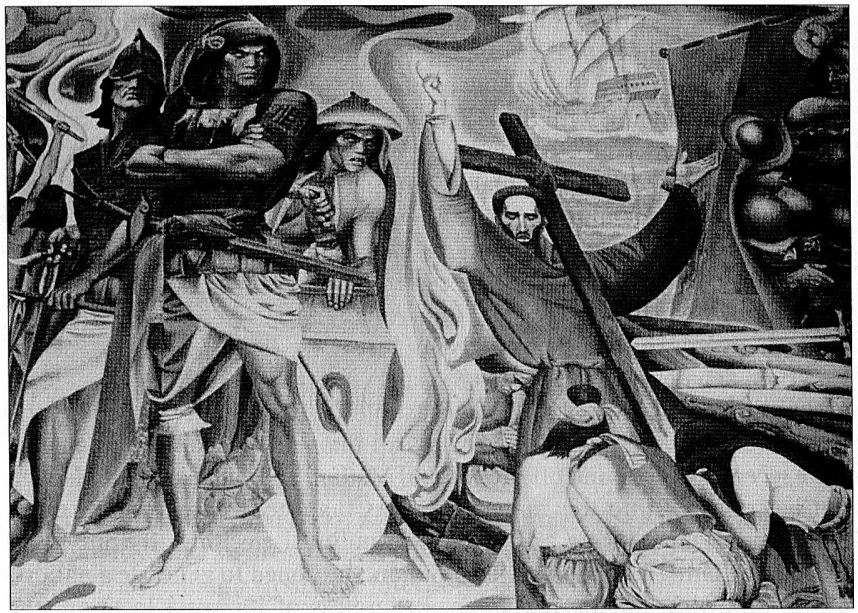
that he had in his arm. Which seeing, all those people threw themselves on him, and one of them with a large javelin thrust it into his left leg, whereby he fell face downward. On this all at once rushed upon him with lances of iron and bamboo and with these javelins, so that they slew our mirror, our light, our comfort, and our true guide."[3]

Although the battle of Mactan establishes Spain's "Western discovery" of the Philippines, and the historical importance of Filipino martial arts in the Philippines, it is possible that this battle did not occur at this location, particularly given the paucity of supporting archaeological data. If the battle had, in fact, taken place, one would expect to find remnants of Spanish swords, armor, or artillery on or off the coast of Mactan Island. However, debates in Philippine newspapers during 1994 suggest that recent archaeological expeditions off the coast of Mactan uncovered no supporting artifacts. Interestingly, archaeological remains of Spanish armaments have recently been found off the coast of Mattan, an island south of Mactan. Further research into this matter indicates that the debate over the exact location surfaced during a time of local political elections. By one party linking the battle to his island (i.e., Mattan), he hoped to generate a nationalistic following for his campaign. Regardless of its exact location, the battle of Mactan did occur in the Visayas, near the island of Cebu, and as Pigafeta described.

A Spanish Colony

Upon Magellan's unsuccessful second circumnavigation of the globe (he had unknowingly sailed around the Philippines six years earlier), Spain sent three other unsuccessful expeditions to Southeast Asia lead by Loaisa, Saavedra, and Villalobos, respectively. Between 1525 and 1542, Spain repeatedly attempted to gain control of the spice trade in the Philippines and the Moluccas, taking rights and control from Portugal.

It wasn't until 1565, however, that the Spanish gained a foothold in the Philippines through the efforts of Miguel Lopez de Legaspi. On November 21, 1564, King Philip II of Spain decided to send an expedition from New Spain (Mexico) to be led by Legaspi, who was accompanied by Father Andres de Urdaneta. Remembering the plight of Magellan, Legaspi befriended the natives he encountered and later "conquered" them by gaining their trust and through their conversion to the Catholic faith. Upon Legaspi's arrival at Leyte he found the natives uncooperative and largely unfriendly. They were so hostile that Legaspi's fleet was forced to travel southward as far as Bohol before they found friendly inhabitants. To show a mutual acceptance of their trust, Legaspi and Rajah Sikutana (a.k.a., Si Katuna, Sri Katuna) made a blood compact *(sandugo)* to seal their friendship.



Spanish introduce Catholicism to the Philippines

The *sandugo* blood compact

Rajah Soliman

Panday Pira

During his brief stay in Bohol, Legaspi decided to move on to the island of Cebu, where there were many small villages. Upon his arrival Legaspi sent word to the islanders that they should receive him in friendship. Recalling the words and deeds of Magellan, the Cebuanos were reluctant to do so, and they armed themselves and prepared for battle. Being more heavily armed and generally better equipped for combat, Legaspi's men took the island of Cebu with little trouble, establishing a fort and a new town called *Villa San Miguel* (the Village of Saint Michael).

Unfortunately for the Spaniards this village did not last long, due to continuous raids by Cebuano warriors. Thus, in 1568, Legaspi decided to relocate to the island of Panay, and later to Manila. Vic Hurley notes that during pre-Hispanic times the Manila bay area was known as Lusong. It was guarded by a fortress constructed of *nipa* and bamboo called a *cotta,* defended by Islamic warriors, and ruled by the Muslim chieftain, Rajah Nicoy.[4] Nicoy was succeeded by Rajah Kanduli, who, in turn, was succeeded by Rajah Lakanduli. Lakanduli was succeeded by the Bornean prince, Rajah Soliman, who was the reigning chief of Manila during the time of Lagespi's resettlement.

Legaspi asked his nephew Martin de Goiti to conquer Manila for the king of Spain, and sent a message asking for the friendship and support of Rajah Soliman. Although Soliman agreed, a cannon was fired from a Spanish ship, which hit Soliman's fortress, causing a battle to erupt. Soliman fought valiantly to his death. Needless to say, the power of the Spanish ships was greater than the combat skills of native islanders, and Legaspi was victorious. Miguel Lopes de Legaspi was therefore responsible for the first Spanish settlement and colonial government in Manila in 1571. With the help of Mindanao-native Panday Pira, a blacksmith with a cannon foundry, the new Capital of the Spanish settlement was presumed impenetrable.

Once this foothold was secured, Spanish families began to build new homes to welcome the many new arrivals from New Spain. Even though the Spanish government was established and Manila was shielded with wooden barricades armed with Pira's cannons, the settlement was subjected to a number of raids and attacks. In fact, the feared Chinese pirate, Limahong (a.k.a., Lim-Ah-Hong; Lin Feng; Lin T-ao), assisted by his Japanese counterpart, Sioco, attacked Manila from the sea. Although born of noble parents, Limahong preferred a life of crime and attacked Manila with sixty-two armed junks and some four-thousand warriors on November 29, 1574.[5] Although Limahong's first attack was somewhat successful, at least based on the death toll, the Spaniards kept him at bay. Before he could mount his second attack, however, Limahong and his men were defeated at the hands of Juan de Salcedo, Legaspi's grandson.

Escaping capture at the hands of Salcedo, Sioco, Limahong, and his remaining army, fled to Pangasinan where they captured a number of chieftains, holding them ransom for food and other privileges. It wasn't long until the Philippines' new colonial government readied a force to repel the Chinese pirate. Headed by Salcedo, the troops arrived in Pangasinan and took Limahong by surprise, destroying his fleet of junks. After some four months of constant attacks on Limahong's fort the colonial army was able to capture it, but not before Limahong's men had built two-dozen new boats. Limahong and Sioco were said to have successfully escaped through a secret canal and were never known to have returned to the Philippines.

The battles against Limahong and Sioco were important events in the development of Filipino martial arts. Although the Chinese had been trading with the Filipinos since the ninth century, this marked the first time that the Filipino engaged the Chinese in hand-to-hand combat. It was also the first time that the Filipino had seen the Japanese method of swordplay which they were later to encounter during World War II. These battles also marked the first time that the Filipino fought alongside the Spaniards, when not engaging their own people for tribal property. Hence, these skirmishes allowed the Filipino warriors to experience first hand, how their martial arts stood against the fighting arts of three countries, Spain, China, and Japan.

In 1578, the Spanish Governor de Sande initiated the first official raids on the southern Philippines with hopes of conquest and conversion. Hurley notes that Spain's interference with the Moro's religious beliefs paved the way for legitimate jihad (holy wars), as enjoined by the tenets of the *Qur'an.*[6] Faced by Moros and malaria the Spanish conquistadors met with repeated defeat when their Toledo blades engaged Moro *kris* and *barong.*

In 1596, Esteban Rodriguez de Figuroea set out to conquer Moroland (Mindanao and Sulu) with the hopes of conquering it for de Sande and converting the infidel Moros to Christianity. Figuroea foolishly sailed to Buhayen, Mindanao, the territory of Datu Silongan, with a single company of soldiers and three priests. He sent a reconnaissance team into the jungle but they never returned. Figuroea than took the initiative and led his conquistadors 100 yards up beach. They were ambushed by the Moros and Figuroea was cleaved almost in two by a *kris* wielded by Silongan's youngest brother. The Spanish carried their leader in retreat to the beach and fled back to Manila.

In 1597, the Spanish forced the disbandment of Manila's Sultanate. By 1637, the Spanish friars had written and created a new form of theatrical entertainment known generically as *komedya.* These are socio-religious plays depicting the victory of the Christian Spaniards over the Muslim Moors of Africa. They were used as propaganda by the Spanish friars to spread Catholicism throughout the Philippines by showing the superiority of the Christian faith over pagan beliefs. In time, more plays emerged for the Spaniard's enjoyment. These plays were viewed by the Filipino as a mechanism through which to practice their martial arts under the guise of harmless entertainment. As Spanish influence declined across the archipelago, the *komedya,* too, decreased in popularity.

In an effort to trade with and subdue the Moros, Miguel Lopez de Legaspi sent a number of expeditions to the southern Philippines. What the Spanish found, however, were not the easily conquerable Filipinos who inhabited the central and northern islands of the Visayas and Luzon, respectively. Instead, they encountered well-organized and skillfully trained Islamic warriors. It wasn't until after some twenty-nine years of war that the Spanish colonial government sent enough supporting troops to Mindanao and were able to establish an outpost. Tarling notes that although Jesuit missionaries were able to negotiate peace treaties for the teaching of Christianity in Zamboanga in 1635, they regrettably did so with the use of military force.[7] As a result, the Jesuits and Spanish conquistadors felt the wrath of Sultan Kudarat.

From 1619 to 1671, Mindanao was ruled by Sultan Muhammad Dipatuan Kudarat (a.k.a., Cachil Kudarat), a direct descendant of Sharif Kabungsuwan. Kudarat and his *mandirigma* repelled continuous Spanish attempts at invasion of his sultanate in Jolo and Zamboanga. In an effort to subdue Kudarat, the Spanish Governor Corcuera led a well-equipped expedition to Mindanao in 1637. On the banks of the Rio Grande Mindanao stood the proud fort of Sultan Kudarat, surrounded by over two-thousand armed warriors. What followed was a grueling battle that left the colonial forces in control of the town, while Kudarat and his followers retreated to the hills. It was in these mountains that Sultan Kudarat did the unheard of—he befriended the other Muslim Sultans and after four years of preparation

Sultan Kudarat

attacked the Spanish stronghold. Using their native skills in silat and kali, the sultans were victorious. After the death of Corcuera, Francisco Atienza, the commandant of Jolo, offered Kudarat concessions of alliance, land, and trade zones in an effort to achieve peace. Kudarat's diplomacy was successful and by 1663 the Spanish had closed their fort at Zamboanga.

Perhaps the best known quality that Sultan Kudarat possessed was the respect even his enemies bestowed upon him. It is said that upon capturing a conquistador in battle, Kudarat would leave him unharmed and allow him to return to his forces. A practical ruler and good administrator, Kudarat encouraged all Filipinos to trade with one another. In addition, he was an avid promoter of agricultural knowledge. It is Sultan Muhammad Dipatuan Kudarat who's statue proudly stands in Makati, Metro Manila, the prime business district of the Philippines. His likeness, as well, graces a Philippine commemorative stamp.

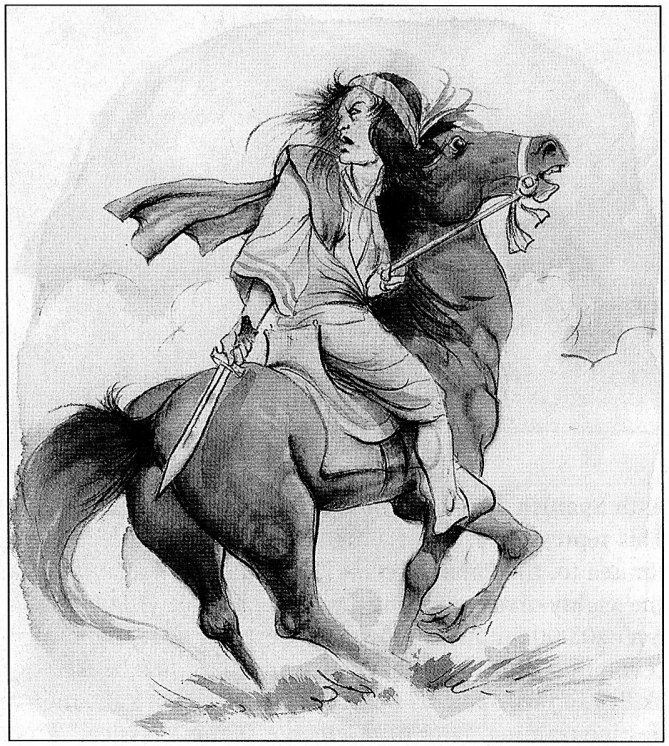
Although the Spaniards were able to establish leadership in the central and northern regions of the Philippines, it was the *mandirigma* of the southern islands who put fear in Spanish hearts through their courageous display in battle of their deft skills in kali. Although many Filipinos complied

Diego Silang

with Spanish rule, other natives continued to feel the sting of oppression. This repression led to a number of Filipino rebellions, including, but not limited to, the Palaris Revolt (1762–65), the Cagayan Uprising (1763), and the eighty-five year long Dagohoy Revolt (1744–1829). This revolt left over 20,000 Filipino followers under their own government in Bohol. These revolutions, it should be noted, were all led and backed by men and women skilled in the "ancient" Filipino martial arts of kali—then relegated to clandestine training, later to re-emerge as the "classical" arts of eskrima.

In 1762, the Philippines became involved in the Seven-Years War between England and France. When Spain allied itself with France, Britain declared war on Spain and in turn attacked an ill-prepared Manila. After ten days of battle, English soldiers were able to enter the city through a rupture in its surrounding walls. Through the efforts of the Spanish Lieutenant-Governor, Don Simon de Anda y Salazar, the remainder of the archipelago retained its loyalty to Spain. British control of Manila was short-lived as the Seven-Years War ended on February 10, 1763. The collapse of central Spanish authority during the British occupation of Manila, however, led to a number of uprisings in Pangasinan, Cavite, Tondo, Iloilo, Samar, and Zamboanga, to name a few.

Perhaps the most serious of these was the Rebellion of Diego Silang (1762–63). Seeing that the Spanish could be defeated, Silang openly protested the cruel treatment of the *indios* (Philippine natives) by the Spanish. Diego Silang led successful rebellions in Vigan on November 14 and December 25, 1762. On February 1, 1763, Simon de Anda y Salazar issued a decree asking Silang to surrender. Realizing that to actualize his dream of freedom from oppressive Spanish rule the support of the British was essential. Silang then offered peace and friendship to the British. The British



Gabriela Silang

were so impressed with Silang that General Dawson Drake honored him with the title of captain general (the equivalent of vice-president today). Thus, the English offered recognition of Diego Silang as the governor of Ilocos. To his dismay, Diego was never to receive the promised British military support. On May 28, 1763, he was tragically murdered by "friends" of his revolutionary movement. His wife, Gabriela, then vowed to continue the fight for freedom and to avenge her husband's death. Fighting ruthless battles, Gabriela Silang became the most wanted woman under the Spanish rule. Her efforts, however, were suppressed after four months.

In an act of caution Salazar prohibited the brandishing of the dagger and *bolo* (general utility knife) in 1764. This was done with the hopes of preventing future revolts by limiting the Filipino's access to bladed weapons. Henceforth, the arts of kali were practiced with long and short sticks in the central and northern Philippines. With the illegality of the blade the Filipinos were unable to practice their native martial arts as they once had. Sticks were used to simulate daggers and swords. It was no doubt difficult for new students of such arts to visualize cutting an opponent with a wooden

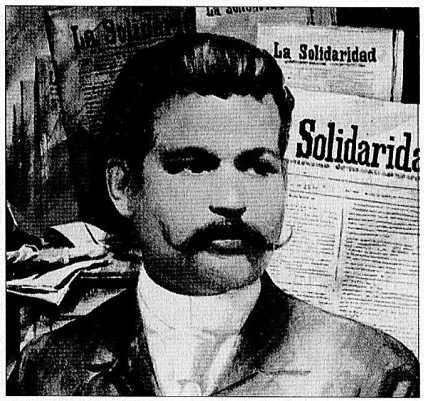
implement, and needless to say, over the next century the "ancient" martial arts of kali became diluted in the Spanish dominated regions to a point where their practitioners fell guilty of becoming too comfortable with the blunt characteristic of hardwood and rattan sticks. The wooden weapons made it possible to defend against an opponent's strike with force-to-force blocks, and to disarm by grabbing the opponent's weapon—two things that are not possible with the sharp steel blades used in kali. The term esgrima, the Spanish word for fencing, was coined by the Spaniards who witnessed a fight between Filipino stick fighters in the Visayas that reminded them of their European fencing movements. It was not uncommon at this time for the arts of eskrima to be referred to by such names as estoque or estocada (after the use of the *estoc* sword), and fraile (since fencing was a favorite past time of the Spanish friars in Manila).

Through rebellion and repression the ancient Filipino martial arts of kali were thus altered. This, coupled with the tremendous influence of Spanish culture, prompted the evolution of eskrima, the "classical" martial art of the Philippines. It was the Spanish rapier and dagger systems that had the greatest influence on its transformation from kali. The use of numbered angles of attack and what have become the traditional eskrima uniforms were products of acculturation (learned and acquired traits of Spanish culture). Although Filipino (a Tagalog-based language) is the current national language of the Philippines, many *eskrimadors* use Spanish as the language for teaching their martial arts.

In 1853 *arnes de mano,* a term used by the Spanish friars to describe the ornate trappings on the *komedya* actors' costumes, became a new name for the hidden, artistic expressions of kali movements. In 1853, arnes de mano was abbreviated to (and accepted as) arnis, after the poet, Laureate Francisco "Balagtas" Baltazar, mentioned it in his epic "Florente at Laura": *"Larong buno't arnes na kinakitaan ng kanikaniyang liksi't karunungan"* (the arts of buno and arnis displayed each one's skill and knowledge).[8]

The Cry for Freedom

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 made travel to the Philippines easier for the European in general and more desirable for the Spaniard in particular. Inspired by the French Enlightenment, many of the new visitors to the archipelago had ideas of reform and independence. Ironically, it was the liberal Spaniards who brought Freemasonry to the Philippines. Contained by the Spanish clergy, these organizations initially only admitted peninsular Spaniards and foreigners. These men were more concerned with ideas of liberation than with revolution. As Freemasonry expanded in the Philippines, its membership opened up to include the *mestizos* (Spanish-



Filipinos; Chinese-Filipinos), but not *indios* (Philippine natives). In 1889 native Filipinos were finally accepted into the secret society. Eager to support Freemasonry, Filipinos joined lodges throughout Europe.[9] It was through these fraternal orders that the Filipino found a medium through which to publish propaganda against the oppressive rule of Spain.

During this time a man named Don Jose de Azes operated a school of Spanish fencing and Filipino eskrima. The school, called Tanghalan ng Sandata (Hall of Weapons), was located inside the Ateneo de Manila, an exclusive Jesuit high school.[10] The Tanghalan was a place where many future leaders of the Philippine Revolution met and practiced eskrima and Western fencing. Jose Rizal, a Filipino national hero and graduate of Ateneo de Manila, went on to study medicine, philosophy, literature, several languages, and arts and crafts, and to practice fencing at the University of Madrid. It was there that he rallied against Spanish oppression in the Philippines. Rizal, with the editorial help of Marcelo H. Del Pilar, formed a Filipino movement called The Propagandists. They published (among a number of brochures and pamphlets) a newspaper called *La Solidaridad* (The Solidarity), which they used as a vehicle to publicly oppose Spanish political, economic, and social policies in the Philippines. Rizal wrote in favor of reforms not revolution, although he was later executed as a revolutionary. Juan Luna, one of Rizal's contemporaries, also studied in Europe and, in addition to his mastery of eskrima, became an expert fencer. Luna was also a distinguished painter who, along with Felix Resurrecion, won high honors in a contest initially confined to Spanish artists.[11]

After the unjust execution of three Filipino priests, the Propaganda Movement grew to full force. Rizal was an avid contributor to their writings, as was Marcelo H. Del Pilar, Graciano Lopez-Jeana, Mariano Ponce, and Antonio Luna. Aside from his support of The Propagandists, Rizal

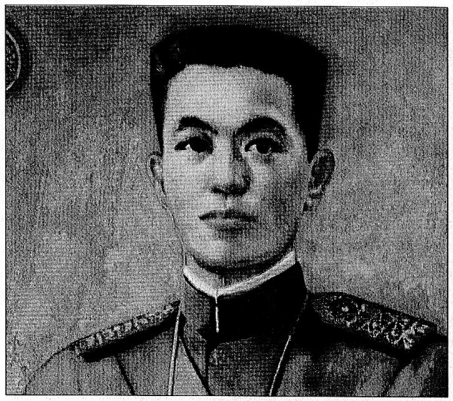
← *(Left)* Jose Rizal
← *(Right)* Marcelo H. Del Pilar

Andres Bonifacio

continued his own efforts to gain reform for the Filipinos through the publication of his literary masterpieces, *Noli Me Tangere* (The Lost Eden), and its sequel, *El Filibusterismo* (The Subversive). After publishing his novels Rizal decided he could no longer help his country by living in Europe so he returned to the Philippines with his sister, Lucia. Shortly after his arrival Rizal and a few associates formed a society called La Liga Filipina, whose purpose it was to unite all Filipinos. With the news of this development, the Spanish government arrested Rizal and sent him in exile to the city of Dapitan, Zamboanga.[12]

Rizal was the idol of the oppressed Filipino and his banishment only led many more to think in terms of reform and rebellion again Spain. One such individual was Andres Bonifacio, who, on July 2, 1892, founded the secret society called Ang Kataastaasan Kagalanggalangang Katipunan ng Anak ng Bayan (The Highest and Most Honorable Association of the Sons of the People)—or Katipunan (brotherhood), for short. The Katipunan was concerned with one thing: complete separation from Spain by way of revolution. To do this it gathered the popular fanatical support of some 200,000 Filipinos and trained them in the basic techniques of eskrima.

Rizal, opposed to a revolution, argued that the Filipino people were neither properly equipped nor trained and would consequently suffer great losses. Much to his surprise, Rizal found that the Katipunan had already nominated him as their president. Knowing his life was in danger, Rizal left Zamboanga with the permission of Governor Ramon Blanco to work as a doctor in Cuba. Until the Spanish authorities discovered their intentions, the Philippine Revolution had been set for August 30, 1896. Not wanting to loose their chance at freedom, Bonifacio gathered his followers for a secret meeting in Balintawak. He asked his followers if they would fight until death. They all agreed. Thus began the Philippine Revolution.



Emilio Aguinaldo

While in Barcelona, Spain, en route to Cuba, Rizal was arrested by Spanish authorities. They accused him of being a member of the Katipunan. Rizal pleaded that he had no association with the Society and, in fact, did not know Andres Bonifacio. Despite his protestations of innocence, on December 28, 1896, Jose Rizal was found guilty of having caused the Philippine Revolution by way of his novels and the society, La Liga Filipina. On December 30, Rizal, arms tied, was sentenced to be shot in the back by a firing squad in Bagumbayan Field. This was done in hopes of suppressing further revolutionary actions with Rizal as an example. Being shot in the back was the mark of a traitor and Rizal, who felt he had never committed treason, quickly turned and faced the firing squad as they showered him with bullets. Contrary to the intentions of the Spanish, the death of Rizal was the single factor that united all *indios* across the length of the Philippines to unite in the revolt against Spain.

Although the Katipunan was gaining ground against the Spaniards in many areas, it was ultimately plagued by internal disputes. In fact, two rival factions, the Magdalo of Cavite and the Magdiwang of Noveleta, arose, thus dividing the Brotherhood. When attempting to reunite his revolutionary movement, Bonifacio found that his authority had already been superseded by General Emilio Aguinaldo. Aguinaldo was chosen as the president of the new Philippine revolutionary government. Bonifacio, opposing such a *coupe d'état,* initiated an internal war. Soon thereafter, however, Bonifacio and his brother, Procorpio, were captured and later executed for treason on May 10, 1897.

Despite the execution of Rizal, the court martial of Bonifacio, a number of failed treaties, and the exile of Aguinaldo to Hong Kong, the Philippine Revolution, which was spirited and headed by *eskrimadors,* continued in full force until America declared war on Spain in 1898.

4

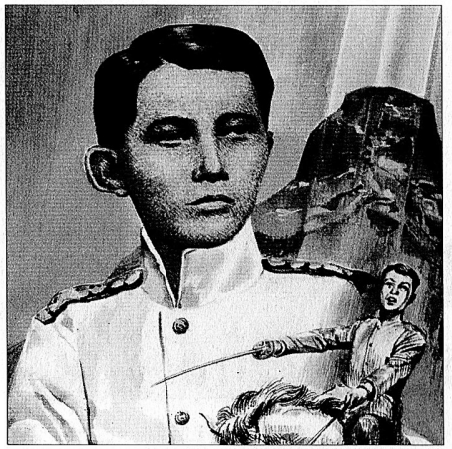
The Twentieth Century

The ancient world has provided several cultural elements that the modern world has inherited.

—JOHN P. McKAY

American Intervention

Cuba had been waging war against Spain since 1895 with hopes of gaining its independence. In an effort to protect its economic interests, the United States sent a fleet of ships to defend the island. On February 15, 1898, stray artillery coming from Spanish armaments "accidentally" sunk the American warship, *Maine,* anchored in Havana Harbor. Outraged by the death of nearly 250 American servicemen, the United States declared war on Spain on April 25, 1898. On May 1st, Commodore George Dewey led the U.S. Asiatic Squadron into Manila Bay. Spotting the Spanish Armada arrayed off the coast of Cavite, the Spanish-American War began. During the ensuing battle the United States lost only one man; there were 380 Spanish casualties. The Treaty of Paris was then signed by the United States and Spain on December 10, 1898. The terms of the treaty left the United States as the new "proprietor" of the Philippines, having purchased it from Spain for twenty million dollars. This exchange of power was immediately accepted by General Emilio Aguinaldo, who had recently returned from his exile in Hong Kong. He had been asked to return to the Philippines to lead Filipino troops in support of America's effort to free the Philippines from Spanish rule. Aguinaldo's support of the Treaty was predicated on the promise that rule of the archipelago would immediately be ceded to the Filipinos.



Gregorio Del Pilar

After the conclusion of the treaty with Spain, however, the United States found itself in a key position to expand its Asian economic and imperial power-base. The Philippines, located in central Southeast Asia, was an ideal place for the refueling of American ships *en route* to the Far East. Disillusioned but not defeated, the Filipinos once again were subject to the government of a foreign power. Since the United States had promised immediate independence of the Philippines and reneged, General Emilio Aguinaldo declared the establishment of the Republic of the Philippines on January 23, 1899. Angered by America's continued occupation of the archipelago, Aguinaldo and his troops again took up arms for freedom and initiated the Filipino-American War on February 4, 1899.

Philippine Insurrection

The Filipino Nationalists, led by Generals Aguinaldo and Gregorio Del Pilar, fought long and hard for their freedom, engaging the American General John C. Pershing in battle. After four years of fighting Gregorio Del Pilar, the youngest general in the Revolutionary Army, took a firm last stand with a handful of men and held off American troops at Tirad Pass long enough for Aguinaldo to escape. Aguinaldo, however, was soon captured and in March, 1901, signed a personal oath of allegiance to the United States. Although Aguinaldo attempted to dissuade his followers from further attacks and raids he was not immediately successful. On September 28, 1901, 200 knife-wielding Filipino guerrillas attacked Company C of the Ninth Infantry at Balangiga Port, Samar Island. The Ninth Infantry was an American regiment with recent combat experience in Cuba (1898), Manila (1899), and China (1900). Although equipped with standard issue Krag rifles and .38 caliber Colt revolvers, Company C was demolished, save for two dozen men, at the hands of the *bolo*-wielding Filipinos. The fighting ended soon thereafter and the United States continued to rule over the islands for another forty-four years. To facilitate peace in the archipelago Henry T. Allen organized the Philippine Constabulary as the local police force. By 1938 the Constabulary had achieved a national enforcement, and after World War II it became an official branch of the Philippine Army. The Philippine Constabulary reached its peak in 1975 when the Integrated National Police Force was organized, bringing all police forces under Constabulary command.

The decades to come, however, were not peaceful, but brutal and filled with jungle warfare. Great men like Pilar and Aguinaldo were replaced by *tulisanes* (bandits) and Moro *juramentados* (Muslim religious fanatics who waged quasi-jihad). The Moros would tie rawhide strips around their extremities, providing ready-made tourniquets in an effort to deaden pain and slow the loss of blood, hence halting the immediate onset of shock should they be cut or shot. They would then run, in a murderous frenzy, through an area populated by Christians and kill them indiscriminately. To the Moros, the oath and action of running *juramentado* was a religious rite. They believed that the more infidels they killed—and their own ultimate death—was but a way to ensure themselves a higher seat in heaven.

So feared and respected were these Moros that the United States Marines enacted two specific measures for protection. Because the Moros would run *juramentado* with their *kris* or *barong,* decapitating American officers and servicemen who stood in their path, the U.S. Marines adopted the use of leather-lined collars, which first appeared in the American Civil War, thus earning the nickname "leathernecks." Moreover, it was not uncommon for American officers to fire an entire round of .38 caliber bullets into a Moro and not stop him. Consequently, after 1911 the Colt .45 automatic pistol became standard issue for American servicemen fighting in the Philippines.

The Moro *juramentados* and Christian Filipino guerrillas were unsuccessful in their fight against the superior firepower of the United States. However, in the words of the revered Filipino statesman, Opolinario Mabini, "The Filipinos realize that they can expect no victory over the American forces; they are fighting to show the American people that they are sufficiently intelligent to know their rights . . . the Filipinos maintain their fight against American troops, not from any special hatred, but in order to show the American people that they are far from indifferent to their political situation."[1]

In time, most Filipinos came to accept America's administration under military-governor General Douglas MacArthur. English soon became the

national language of the archipelago, as Spanish had been before. In the face of continued agitation for independence, the United States Congress passed a number of bills that ensured a degree of Philippine autonomy. The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 instituted a commonwealth government and promised complete independence by 1944. In 1935, under a new constitution, Manuel Luis Quezon was elected as the first internationally recognized president of the Commonwealth of the Philippines. The archipelago remained a commonwealth of the United States until the onset of World War II.

World War II and After

On December 5, 1941, Japan invaded the Philippines, and by May of the following year it had taken control of most of the archipelago. The United States armed forces, led by General Douglas MacArthur and aided by Filipino bolo battalions, were successful in recapturing the country in the early part of 1945. Also fighting the Japanese was a group called Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon (People's Army Against Japan), or, simply, the Huks. This group was established in Nueva Ecija by leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines. The Huks were the strongest guerrilla unit fighting against the Japanese in central Luzon during the Japanese Occupation, and by September Japan had surrendered. In part due to the people's support of America in its war effort against Japan, on July 4, 1946, the Republic of the Philippines was inaugurated with Manuel A. Roxas as president.

For the third time in less than fifty years, American troops had fought a war on Filipino soil. As at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, Filipinos did not stop fighting at the end of the second World War. Security forces fought a long campaign against the Huk guerrillas during the 1950s, and they are still fighting Moro insurgents who are campaigning for their independence from the Catholic central government in an effort to establish their own Islamic nation-state. However, former minister of national defense, Raymond Magsaysay, suppressed these attempts through progressive land reforms and stern military action. The Huks then reorganized themselves and formed the Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (People's Liberation Army). This movement, too, was suppressed by Magsaysay. In 1969 former members of the People's Liberation Army founded the New People's Army (NPA), the Maoist-oriented military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Fighting then President Ferdinand Marcos' actions, the New People's Army established the Moro Liberation Front in the early 1970s and gained further momentum for their ideals of freedom.

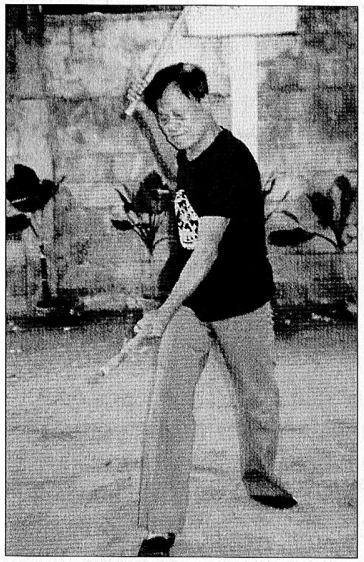
The Philippines has always been the home of underground reform and revolutionary movements, so it is no surprise that the twentieth century

Anciong Bacon and Johnny Chiuten

continues to be plagued by a plethora of such vigilante groups. Many of these groups also appear to be headed or at least nominally comprised of martial arts experts who use their indigenous fighting systems as a vehicle to perpetuate their cause. As Serrill noted in *Time* magazine, the next generation of Filipino freedom fighters "go by names like Soldiers of Christ, Nation Watchers and the People's Movement Against Communism. Some of their members are menacing-looking young men and women with headbands and bolos stuck in their belts. The more bizarre groups are called *Tadtad,* or Chop-Chop, because they ritually slash their bodies during initiation. They believe in potions and amulets they say make them invisible to their enemies."[2] With martial arts as devastating as those of the Philippines, it is no wonder that such revolutionary movements have yet to be eliminate in contemporary Filipino society.

Reemergence of a Warrior's Art

The martial arts of the Philippines continued to exist throughout the constant turmoil of the political situation and reemerged as a subculture that began to gain momentum in Cebu during the 1920s. During this time a number of martial art practitioners there began to openly teach their arts. In 1920 the late Venancio "Anciong" Bacon, the founder of Balintawak arnis, opened the Labangon Fencing Club—the first "commercial" arnis club in Cebu. Following Bacon's lead Johnny Chiuten, Pedring Romo, and the famous Cañete brothers also began openly teaching their respective styles of stick-fighting. The Philippine Olympic Stadium also began to promote

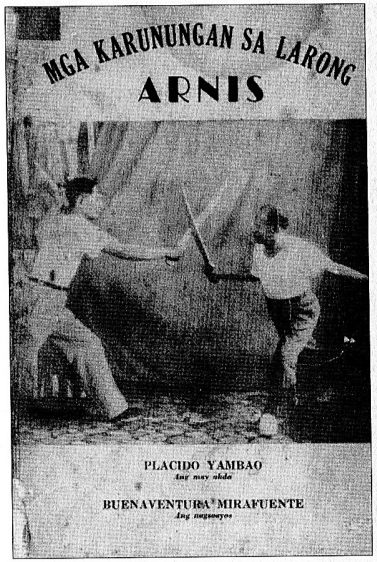


Euling Cañete

full-contact arnis tournaments in the 1920s. Placido Yambao reigned as champion in a number of matches held in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Thirty years later Yambao wrote the first book on arnis. It was also during this decade that the United States was given its first glimpse of these fascinating arts. From 1920–29, Ramiro A. Estalilla, Sr. taught Rigonan-Estalilla kabaroan at the Minneapolis Athletic Club in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

It wasn't until the 1930s, however, that the various masters in Cebu and the neighboring islands came together in the interest of perpetuating the Filipino martial arts. As a result, the famed Doce Pares Association was organized in 1932. The Doce Pares Association is the oldest and longest standing martial arts organization in the Philippines and was a driving force behind the reemergence of Filipino martial arts into Filipino society. In 1939, the six Cañete brothers joined Doce Pares. With differences in political view, Bacon left and founded the Balintawak Self-Defense Club; Eulogio "Euling" Cañete became the new Doce Pares president.

In 1937, Benjamin Luna Lema founded the Lightning Arnis Club in Mambusao, Capiz. Ten years later, in 1947, he was requested by the United States Air Force to relocate to Agana, Guam, to instruct their enlisted men in hand-to-hand combat. The 1940s also saw the development of the infamous Filipino butterfly knife known as the *balisong*. In a town in Batangas now known as Barrio Balisong, Perfecto de Leon is credited with developing and manufacturing the first *balisong* knife. Since that time the *balisong* has become perhaps the most infamous Filipino weapon.



The first book on Filipino martial arts

Although developed in the 1920s, sikaran, a Filipino art of foot-fighting, received recognition and acceptance in the 1950s from such countries as Japan and Korea. Arnis also began to increase in popularity in Negros Occidental during the fifties. From 1956–58 the Bacolod Arnis Club existed under the direction of its founder, Narciso "Sisoy" Gyabros, who taught twelve methods of arnis and in turn had twelve disciples. Amador "Mading" Chavez was one disciple who was fortunate to have learned all of the twelve styles. After the Bacolod Arnis Club dissolved, Chavez founded the Chavez Arnis Group in 1959. 1957 saw the publication of Placido Yambao's book, *Mga Karunungan sa Larung Arnis*, which did much to expose the art of arnis. This book caused quite a stir among Filipino martial arts practitioners, as they still regarded the art as a secret weapon in their battle against oppression. In 1959, Gerardo Alcuzar founded the Durex Self-Defense Club at the Cebu Institute of Technology, where in addition to eskrima, he offered instruction in combat judo and karate.

During the sixties interest in the Filipino martial arts again increased as schools and styles opened themselves up to the public. In Manila this revival was initiated by an organization called Samahan sa Arnis ng Pilipinas (Association of Arnis in the Philippines). During the launching of the arnis revival in Manila Alejandro Roces, former secretary of Philippine education, praised members of the Association, stating: "A neglected aspect of our cultural history as a people, arnis is as old as the Philippines. It is germane to the Filipino, his culture and temperament. During the prehistoric times,

Jose Mena

it was indulged in as a form of recreation. Filipinos learned it together with reading, writing, religion, cantation, and Sanskrit. It was not, at that time, merely fencing, as we now regard that term. It had its variations in the form of dance and combative arts known as sayaw or sinulog, which was both artistic and entertaining."[3]

In 1960, Romeo Mamar founded the art of tapado, which utilizes a forty-three-inch staff held at one end with both hands. The art has only two movements in its repertoire, and they are simultaneously blocks and strikes. Mamar founded this art in Taloc, Bago City, after becoming disheartened with the limitations of the *lagas, sinamak, layaw,* and *uhido* styles he had learned. In 1963 the Samahan sa Arnis ng Pilipinas sponsored the First National Arnis Festival, which was the first occasion that the Filipino martial arts were televised for all to see. Various demonstrations of arnis were given by experts from Far Eastern University and the Tondo School of Arnis, which was founded by Jose Mena. After studying thirteen styles of arnis, Mena developed a personal style called doblete rapillon or, simply, Mena arnis.

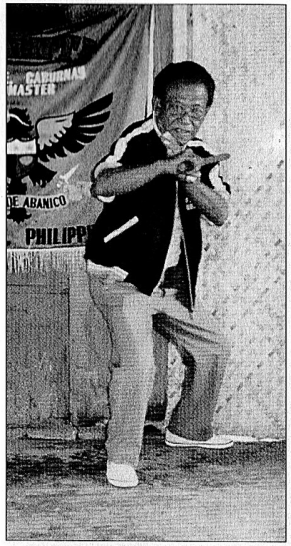
In Cebu City in 1966, Florencio Roque founded the Tornado Garote Self-Defense Club to promote Tatay Ensong's *bahad* style, which Roque had studied in the 1930s. Magdaleno Nolasco founded the Black Cat Judo Club. By 1973 Magdaleno had incorporated escrido—the martial art of Ciriaco "Cacoy" Cañete—and changed the name of his club to the Black Cat Self-

Angel Cabales and Max Sarmiento

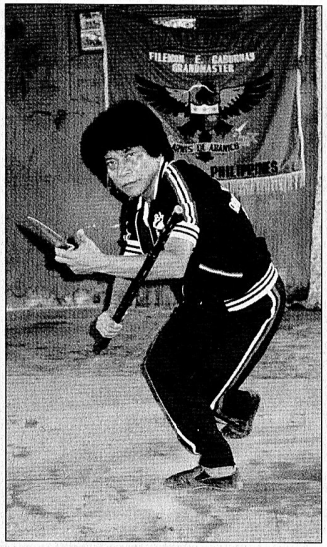
Defense Club. Also in 1966, Angel Cabales, with the assistance of Max Sarmiento and Dentoy Revillar, opened the first "commercial" eskrima academy in the United States in Stockton, California.

In 1968, Bakbakan International was founded in Manila as a brotherhood for martial artists in the Philippines. Since its founding, Bakbakan has promoted Filipino martial arts around the world through the opening of clubs, the sponsoring of seminars, the editing and publishing of books and newsletters, and the production of instructional video tapes. In 1969, under the encouragement of Colonel Arsenio de Borja, then director and secretary-treasurer of the Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation, arnis was offered as part of the curriculum for the Bachelors of Arts degree in the physical education program at Manila's National College of Physical Education.

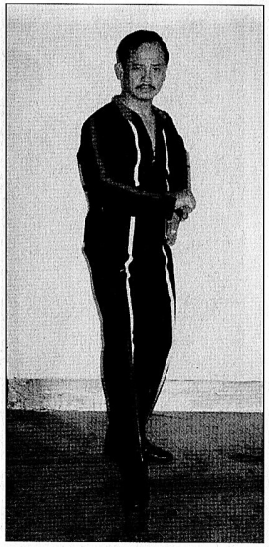
The 1970s marked another important decade in the growth and spread of martial arts in the Philippines. In 1972, Felimon Caburnay, an original Doce Pares Association member, founded the Lapunti Self-Defense Club. With his proficiency in Western fencing and wrestling, eskrima, and combat judo, Caburnay founded a system known as lapunti arnis de abaniko. The lapunti system is currently headed by Ondo Caburnay. The art of yaw-yan, an acronym of *sayaw kamatayan* (dance of death), was also founded in 1972. Yaw-yan is a Filipino kicking style developed by Napolean "Nap" Fernandez. Unlike sikaran, which has similarities to Korean and Japanese



Felimon Caburnay



Ondo Caburnay

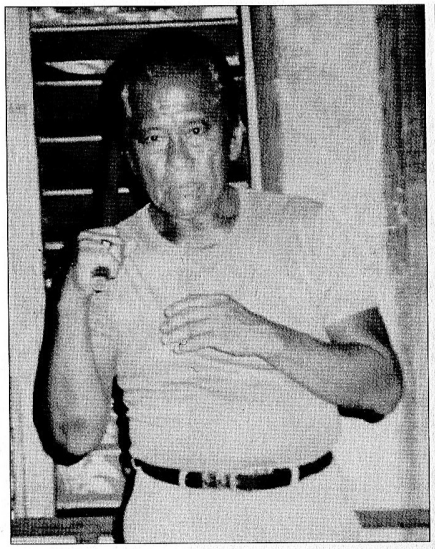


Leo Gaje

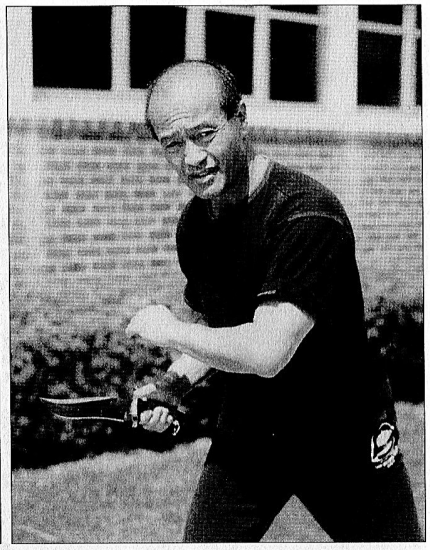
kicking styles, the techniques of yaw-yan are more closely allied to those of muay Thai. Finally, Leo T. Gaje founded the Arnis America Organization in New York City in 1972.

In 1975, the National Arnis Federation of the Philippines (NARAPHIL) was organized by General Fabian Ver. At that time General Ver was the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and became NARAPHIL's first president. The Philippine Arnis Confederation was also founded in this year by Crispulo "Ising" Atillo. The goal of the Confederation was to expand on the techniques of their grandmaster, Teodoro "Doring" Saavedra, also an original member of the Doce Pares Association. The Punta Princesa Eskrima Club was also founded in 1975 by Artemio Paez, Felipe Atillo, and Carlos Navarro. The United States also had its first full-contact arnis tournament at this time. The event was held in New York and was organized by Amante "Mat" Mariñas and supported by Florendo "Vee" Visitacion.

Despite the best intentions, however, all did not go smoothly during the revival of the Filipino martial arts. Many schools became rivals and their members would fight against one another to see who was the best. However, in the hope of once again encouraging solidarity amongst practitioners and schools in Cebu, the Cebu Escrima Association was formed in 1976. The newly formed Association lost no time in promoting the arts and that same year, in association with NARAPHIL, it sponsored the First National Arnis Convention and First Asian Martial Arts Festival. Then, in



Timoteo Maranga

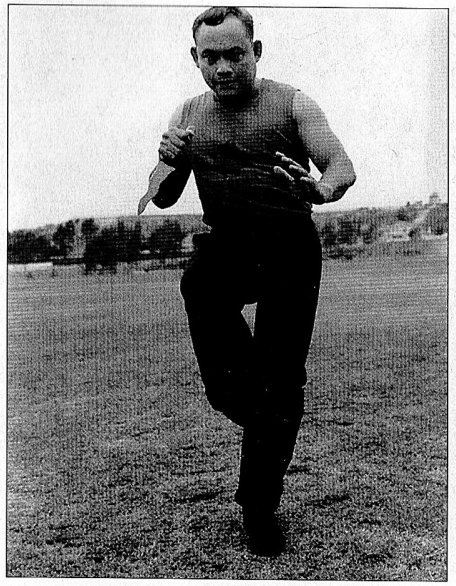


Dan Inosanto

1977, in Talisay, Cebu, Grandmaster Florencio Lasola founded the Oolibama Arnis Club.

Perhaps the most successful association in the central and southern Philippines in the 1970s was the Tres Personas Arnis de Mano Association. Tres Personas was founded by Timoteo E. Maranga with four specific goals: to promote brotherhood and understanding among the advocates of Filipino martial arts; to encourage and propagate Filipino martial arts among youth; to defend the weak, the young, and the old; and to defend oppressed people, country, and God. Maranga's martial arts background is varied and includes studies in combat arnis, judo, karate, and Western wrestling. The tres personas arnis system is comprised of the *de marina, de cadena, riterada,* Batangueña *serrada, florete,* and *sumbrada* fighting styles.

In the United States in 1977, Dan Inosanto published *The Filipino Martial Arts.* Although not the first book on the arts published in English, it was the most widely distributed and had the best coverage of its subject. Inosanto's pioneering efforts to provide exposure for different Filipino masters and systems are reflected in this work. Then, in 1978, Kyokushinkai karate instructor Ben Singleton sponsored the Pro Am Classic in Vista, California. This tournament featured the first full-contact open weapons sparring division in the United States. Narrie Babao, a student of Carlito A. Lañada and Dan Inosanto, took first place. On March 24, 1979, the National Arnis Association of the Philippines sponsored the First Open Arnis



Narrie Babao

Tournament in Cebu City. Then, on August 19, NARAPHIL sponsored the First National Invitational Arnis Tournament in Manila. Among the masters who participated in the "masters sparring division" were Cacoy Cañete from Cebu, Timoteo Maranga and Alfredo Mangcal from Mindanao, Jose Mena, Benjamin Luna Lema, and Florencio Pecate from Manila, and Hortencio Navales from Negros Occidental. In both tournaments Cacoy Cañete reigned as champion. Interestingly, the Philippine's most infamous master, Antonio Ilustrisimo, refused to compete under the tournament's rules, stating: "If anyone wants to take my reputation, they will have to fight me with a sword." There were no challengers.

In the eighties a number of tournaments were sponsored to further establish arnis as a sport. On March 16, 1985, the Third National Arnis Tournament was held in Cebu City, and the Fourth National was held in Bacolod City on July 26, 1986. Then, on January 2, 1987, Dionisio "Diony" Cañete, the nephew of Cacoy Cañete, was elected as the new president of NARAPHIL. From May 26–29, 1989, the Philippine Kali Grand Championship was held in Manila. Both events were jointly sponsored by the Kali Association of the Philippines and the Armed Forces of the Philippines. In response to the worldwide spread of Filipino martial arts, the World Kali-Eskrima-Arnis Federation (WEKAF) was founded in 1987 in Los Angeles, California, with Dionisio Cañete as its first president. The First United States National Eskrima-Kali-Arnis Championships was then held in San Jose, California

Cacoy Cañete

in October of 1988. The First Eastern USA Eskrima-Kali-Arnis Championships was held in New Jersey in May of the following year. Then, on August 11–13, 1989, WEKAF sponsored the First World Kali-Eskrima-Arnis Championships in Cebu, Philippines.

One of the best-known grandmasters of arnis in the Western world is Remy Presas. Presas first gained popularity in the United States in 1983, with the publication of his third book, *Modern Arnis: Filipino Art of Stick Fighting,* after which Presas became known as the "Father of Modern Arnis." He has since been featured on the cover of numerous martial arts magazines, produced six instructional video tapes, is a member of the Black Belt Hall of Fame, and has a larger base of students around the world than any other single Filipino master.

In 1991, Arnis Philippines became the "official" government-sponsored organization to spread the art of arnis. Arnis Philippines then became the thirty-third member of the Philippine Olympic Committee. Through this organization's efforts arnis was featured as a demonstration sport in the 1991 Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games). Arnis Philippines then formed the International Arnis Federation which brought thirty countries together to work toward the acceptance of arnis as a demonstration sport in the Olympic games. With arnis now the national sport of the Philippines, the Senate Committee on Youth and Sports Development, the Philippine Sports Commission, and the Philippine Olympic Committee jointly sponsored and

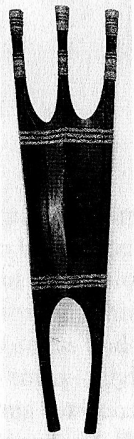
endorsed the Grand Exhibition of Martial Arts in Manila. The event, held on July 31, 1993, featured demonstrations by practitioners of arnis Lanada, sikaran, kali Ilustrisimo, sagasa, ngo cho kun, pencak-silat, hwarangdo, hsin-i liu ha pa fa, praying mantis kung-fu, and Kyokushin-kai karate.

The twentieth century has seen a revival of martial arts in the Philippines unparalleled in any country. In the past sixty years, the arts went from almost complete isolation and obscurity to international exposure and commercialization. With this exposure, a plethora of new organizations and associations, new schools and styles, new masters and grandmasters have emerged, echoing the ethnic, tribal, and religious separateness in the Philippines. What the Filipino martial arts needs if they are to continue through the next century is a stronger sense of cohesion. One organization must be crafted to accommodate the various martial ideologies. A single ranking structure must be adopted to assure a high standard for and legitimization of rank among and between systems and styles. This must happen without losing sight of the roots of the arts, a frequent drawback of commercialization.

In closing this section, the words of Leonard B. Meyer are fitting: "New styles and techniques, schools and movements, programs and philosophies, have succeeded one another with bewildering rapidity. And the old has not, as a rule, been displaced by the new. Earlier movements have persisted side by side with later ones, producing a profusion of alternative styles and schools—each with its attendant aesthetic outlook and theory."

PART THREE

Community, Culture, and Artifacts



5

Ethos and Worldview of the Filipino Warrior

For the warrior there is no thing more blessed
than a lawful strife. Happy the warriors
who find such a strife coming unsought to them
as an open door to Paradise.
—BHAGAVAD GITA

Introduction

While Filipinos lack a sense of nationalism—as evidenced by Spain's ability to dominate the archipelago by the method of divide-and-conquer—in times of regional and/or national oppression, practitioners of Filipino martial arts have been responsible for launching various underground revolutionary movements. In times of stress and strife the Filipino returns to his spiritual/religious and martial roots—relying upon amulets and prayers, and indigenous martial art forms for consolation and protection. It is no wonder, then, that martial culture and the warrior way of life are such integral parts of Filipino society.

For the *mandirigma* there was no greater ethic than diligent training, control over mind and emotions, and contact with and control of the spirit world. The single-minded maintenance of this ethic is perhaps what made the Filipino warriors both feared and respected. Maliszewski notes that "the role of the warrior has been a position of importance to many cultures historically, with the efficacy of combat strategies and warrior skills often determining the course of history and the continued existence of groups of people."[1]

In generally wanting to take the initiative when confronted, the

mandirigma tended to act first, suffer any consequence, and reflect on those actions (should he be so inclined) at a later point in time. As such, he developed efficient methods for disarming, disabling, and dispatching an opponent in seconds. One of the most important distinctions of Filipino martial arts, as opposed to other Asian martial arts, is that they are based on attacking methods. While defensive and countering techniques certainly exist, the initiation of combat is primary. In the Philippines, the profession of arms was valued and admired, to the point that it became one of the guiding principles of the culture. It should be noted, however, that this was a necessity as Filipinos have been consistently out-numbered in battle. The *mandirigma,* then, had to rely on sophisticated hand-to-hand fighting skills to kill as many opponents as he could in the shortest time possible. His knowledge of battle plans, human physiology, choice and use of arms, and ability to discern his opponent's intentions before he has had the opportunity to initiate them, was acquired during the continuous repression and rebellion of everyday life in the Philippines. The warrior's success in hand-to-hand combat depended on his understanding and use of various cultural artifacts, in the form of physical fighting techniques, weapons, prayers, and amulets.

Dimensions of the Physical Arts

At the forefront of Filipino martial culture are the physical characteristics of the armed and unarmed fighting arts. For the Filipino warrior the development of physical fighting skills was given priority over all else, understandable given the warring history of the Philippines. To exemplify this, Demetrio notes that the history of Mindanao is grounded in a heritage of struggle and conflict among and between the various ethnic groups and tribes of the Philippines: "Maranaos fighting the Sulus, the Sulus fighting the Iranuns; the Maguindanaos fighting the Buayanes; the Tirurays fighting the Maguindanaos; the Muslims of the south fighting the Spaniards and the Christian Visayans on the northern shore of Mindanao; the Bagobos fighting the Bukidnons; the conflict of piracy between Muslim and Muslim over the sea lanes from Jolo to the Malay Peninsula."[2]

The Filipino warrior was taught the related skills of hand-to-hand combat on three levels: weapon tactics, empty-hand tactics, and healing skills. The need to be well-armed and ready to fight at all times was a general theme in the everyday life of the *mandirigma.* As a result, skills in weaponry were taught prior to those of the empty hands. This is in distinct contrast to the common progression of most Asian martial arts, which consider skills in empty-hand fighting as a prerequisite to learning weapons techniques (e.g., weapons are considered to be an extension of the empty hands).

Both armed and unarmed skills were developed. Training in the use of arms centered around five weapon categories: slash and thrust weapons, impact weapons, projectile weapons, flexible weapons, and protectants. These weapons could be grouped according to any one or more of six characteristics: solo or paired; long or short; heavy or light; curved or straight; single- or double-edged; and one- or two-handed. Four general categories of empty-hand skills were developed: striking techniques, kicking techniques, grappling techniques, and pressure point striking techniques. Striking maneuvers were made with either the open or closed hand in punching, chopping, tearing, poking, or scraping motions. Kicking techniques included foot strikes from all directions, knee strikes, and tripping or sweeping actions. The grappling phase consisted of joint-locking and breaking, choking, holding, and wrestling maneuvers. The use of nerve strikes could be employed when either striking, kicking, or grappling techniques were implemented to effect a temporary paralysis of an opponent's limbs. This would allow the *mandirigma* ample time to reposition himself, should the situation demand it, and terminate his opponent. This knowledge of striking points came only with and understanding of physiology and indigenous healing traditions

Although there are a vast number of martial arts in the Philippines, the weapon-based systems share a good deal of common ground. In fact, there are four stages to learning the arts by which all of the given techniques of a system can be categorized. The first stage is called *muestracion* or demonstration. During this introductory stage or entry-level the student is taught the various methods of footwork, striking sequences, angles of attack, and various defenses. During this stage the student must observe the demonstration of the trainer, teacher, or master and attempt to mimic his movements. The second stage of learning is known as *sangga at patama,* and this refers to methods of give-and-take. It is at this level that students begin to apply their fighting techniques in prearranged drills with a partner. Some of the more generic fighting methods, or what the Filipinos call "styles," include *ocho-ocho* (Figure-8), *rompido* (up-and-down), *banda y banda* (side-to-side), *palis-palis* (go-with-the-force), *lastiko* (elastic), *redoble* (double-up), *redonda* (circle), *abaniko* (fan), and *sinawali* (weaving). The third stage generally consists of the practice of close-quarter sparring and is known as *labanang maalapitan.* Practitioners generally employ their defensive "styles" in close quarter sparring from the closed fighting guard *(tindig serrada).* The fourth stage of learning is called *labanang malayuan* and consists of the practice of long-range sparring. In this range defensive "styles" are generally executed from the open fighting guard *(tindig abierta).*

It should be noted that these four stages of learning are somewhat arbitrary and may not be followed by every teacher. Rather, they are general

stages that are followed at some point but may be rearranged to fit the needs of a student or teacher. The last two stages will vary the most as some systems focus on long-range fighting tactics as opposed to those of close quarters. Hence, levels three and four might well be reversed during the teaching process. After a student has successfully passed through these four stages of learning they are introduced to *labanang totohanan* or actual combat—fighting real opponents in tests of skill and courage.

The *mandirigma's* physical training was considered incomplete without skills in the healing arts. There currently exist a number of folk healing traditions in the Philippines ranging from basic massage and bone setting (hilot) and the administration of herbs (albularyo), to psychic healing (espiritista). From a practical standpoint, knowing how to administer yourself first aid or reset the broken bone of your fellow warrior could only help you in battle. The tradition of hilot was historically taught only to those who were breach born, and is traditionally associated with the skills of the midwife. Despite the advances in medical technology in the Philippines today, there is still much faith bestowed on traditional healers—the skills of whom are reminiscent of acupressure, acupuncture, chiropractic, herbology, and homeopathy. An in-depth discussion of related Filipino folk healing traditions, regrettably, is outside the scope of this work.

Spiritual/Religious Ideology

In *The Dances of the Emerald Isles,* Leonor-Orosa Goquingco divides the Filipino people into six religious groupings, namely: major Christian groups, minor Christian groups, Muslim (Moro) groups, principal pagan or traditionalistic groups, Negrito or Dumagat groups, and multiple-belief-holding groups (such as partially Christianized pagan groups).[3]

In contemporary Filipino society, a substantial number of "Christianized" Filipinos practice martial arts that stem from a long heritage of Islamic underpinnings. Such foundations include the donning of Muslim clothing as their "traditional" uniform, possessing animistic amulets *(agimat)* and verbally and/or mentally reciting prayers *(orasyon),* Catholic, Islamic, and animistic. However, it is difficult to identify the ethos and worldview of the Filipino warrior based on his religious orientation alone. Rather, it follows that Filipino martial arts practitioners seldom subscribe to any particular religious doctrine, but rather embrace a syncretic amalgam of cross-cultural religious ideologies. From this, one could rightfully ascribe the Filipino warrior to that of the multiple-belief-holding group.

Although the Philippines prides itself on being the only predominantly Catholic nation in Asia, its roots are founded in a long heritage of animistic beliefs. To this day these beliefs permeate the Filipino warrior's obser-

The Santo Niño

vance of Christianity.[4] So proud are the Filipino's of their adopted Catholic faith that some contemporary masters of kali, arnis, and eskrima associate the founding of their martial arts with the Santo Niño, the figure of Christ as boy king and patron saint of Cebu. Some practitioners believe that the staff the Santo Niño is often depicted holding in his right hand is symbolic of an eskrima stick. Although these beliefs are unsupported in a historical sense, the belief and faith in which the *mandirigma* places in his major God is no less an important part of his preparation for combat.

The belief in the power of supernatural spirits occupies the soul of the *mandirigma.* The Filipino warrior at once recognizes the holiness of God, yet cannot be pulled away from his belief that ancestral spirits *(anito)* dwell in the natural world that surrounds him. Such belief in the supernatural world has prevailed in Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao for at least four centuries. The *mandirigma* believes that the Lord's crucifix when tied around stone forms talismans called *anting-anting.* These amulets are blessed with prayers, commonly in Latin, known as *orasyones.* These cultural artifacts often become the warrior's courage and are looked upon to protect him from danger. Not unlike Samson's belief that he became weak once Delilah cut his hair, the Filipino warrior, too, overlooks the merit of his individually developed martial skills in favor of believing that they are manifestations of spirit. It is believed that *anito* (known as *diwata* in the Visayas) does not choose their human counterpart but that the *mandirigma,* in fact, controls the power of the *anito.* Filipinos at large believe in the

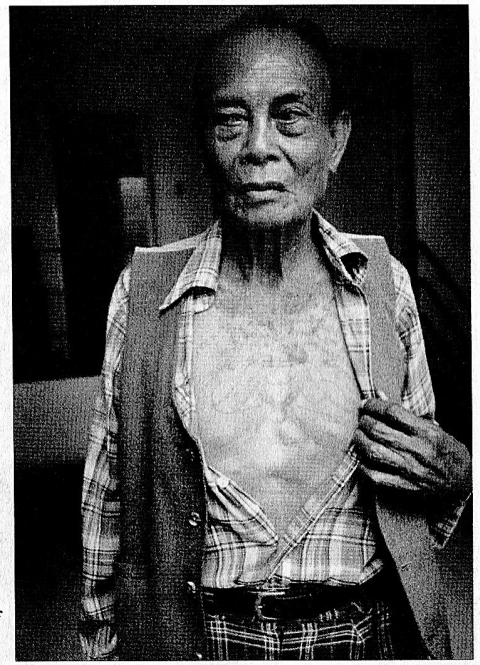
power of spirits to influence the lives of men for good and evil.[5] Moreover, Demetrio, in reference to the *engkanto* (spell or fairy), notes: "The aspects of the sacred which experience of the *engkanto* manifests seems to be the demonic . . . It does not conduce to repose and calm ending in adoration, but to agitation and excitement crowned with anxiety."[6] Interestingly, it is believed that the spirits can be controlled by man through confession, sacrifice, and prayer—a syncretic joining of animism and Catholicism.

The Filipino warrior places a great deal of faith in the power of *orasyon* to provide his ability to control the spirits for his benefit. He is particularly close to them prior to engaging in mortal combat. *Orasyones* are words, phrases, or sentences considered to possess mystical powers when recited mentally or verbally. Considered divine acts of protection and power manifestation, their possession is not limited to practitioners of martial arts. These prayers also serve to bestow good luck on newlyweds for a happy marriage or to farmers for a bountiful harvest. These general *orasyones* can be found in little books known simply as *libritos*. These booklets contain many prayers devoted to the martial arts on various levels, such as to obtain skills in sharpening a sword, for protection against an ambush, to maintain a clear and focused mind in combat, for the ability to disarm an opponent, to break his weapon, or cloud his mind when engaging in a duel.

The following is a list of seven of the more common or "generic" *orasyones* (relevant to the Filipino warrior) and their intended meanings:

- *Licum salicum solorum* —A prayer for disarming an opponent
- *Oracion de S. Pablo contra armas de foigo ip. Ntro. y Av.* —A prayer against firearms and other projectile weapons
- *Sa paghasa ng patalim* —A prayer for skill in sharpening a weapon
- *Upang hindi mabigla ng kaaway* —A prayer against being ambushed
- *Upang hindi matakot* —A prayer for courage or for conquering fear
- *Pagsira ng loob ng kaaway* —A prayer to weaken the enemy's will
- *Jesucristo maria bedreno et curo tenaman* —A prayer to weaken the enemy

It must be noted that for these prayers to be "effective" they must be inherited. Like the ancient martial arts of silat and kali, the Filipino warrior's *orasyones,* too, are considered to be *mana* (an inheritance or family heirloom to be handed down from parent to child, or from master to disciple). When a possessor is on his death bed he assigns an heir to take over the practice of the *guham* (power or force) and *kalaki* (manly prowess or virility). If no inheritor is appointed or available, the possessor must then tear the *orasyon* into small pieces and devour it in a serving of *samporado,* a



Anting-anting tattoo of Antonio Ilustrisimo

rice porridge mixed with chocolate, milk, and sugar.[7] It was only then that the *anito* or *engkanto* would be set free.

Orasyones have been preserved by tattooing them on the possessor's body or weapon in the ancient Filipino Baybayin script, Latin, Sanskrit, Jawi, or any combination thereof. Cato notes: "The Moros did, at times, add talismanic symbols and phrases from the *Qur'an,* written in Jawi script, to the surfaces of their *krises.*[8] To confuse their meaning if the wrong person attempted to translate these prayers (and hence use them for his own gains), abbreviations were often used for many of the words. While this method of preservation prevented the wrong person from using one's *orasyon,* it was not uncommon for the rightful heir to not understand the various dialects in which the prayer was encoded, thus being unable to interpret its meaning and invoke its power.

According to folk beliefs the *mandirigma* also engaging in specific acts in an effort to counteract *orasyones* his enemy might possess. For example, prior to facing an opponent who is believed to possess an *orasyon* that makes him impervious to being cut, the warrior would rub his sword with boiled rice to render his opponent's *orasyon* useless.

Other supernatural connections with martial arts can be found among the Bagobo of Mindanao who believe that they are ensured victory in

Bagobo Warriors with Edgar Sulite and Yuli Romo *(center)*

battle while under the protection of two deities, *Mandarangan* and his wife, *Darago*. To gain access to their spheres of protection, Bagobo warriors offer gifts and sacrifice, presenting to the gods a minimum of two human lives.[9] In addition, the Manobo of Mindanao believe that the Divinity spirit Apila is the god of wrestling, and must be duly honored to effectively use the art in combat.

While the possession of *orasyones* is important, the *mandirigma* places his faith no less in the possession of amulets. Although the *orasyon* is in itself a powerful protectant, it is generally an accompaniment to the warrior's talisman or *anting-anting*. Like *orasyones, anting-antings* possess the power to defeat anything and everything. Unlike *orasyones,* however, *anting-antings* are objects that must be carried by, on, or in the body of the possessor to effect its powers. Rather than a magical phrase, *anting-antings* are objects of Divine power. Furthermore, the form which these power objects assume is as varied as their purported powers. They can be stones or mineral deposits found in the bodies of animals, a snake's fang or crocodile's tooth, a rooster's spur, a piece of polished coconut shell, an odd-shaped root or interesting herb, the seeds of fruits, a magic shirt, parts of the skeletons of children, or a piece of cross-inscribed paper after it has been blessed during Catholic mass. Although *anting-antings* assume many forms, it is the ceremony on Good Friday which facilitates their transformation

Anting-anting amulets

Anting-anting shirt of Macario Sakay

from ordinary good-luck charms to powerful spiritual mediums. This ceremony, moreover, although conducted in the physical church building, is not connected with the Catholic church proper.

Like *orasyones, anting-antings* must be inherited or their power will quickly disappear. Generally, a talisman is either given from father to son on the former's death bed, or given as a token of faith from a master to a student prior to the student fighting in a *patayan,* or "death match." Regardless of the method of transmission, the power of an *anting-anting* is only perpetuated through it being willingly bequeathed. Although a tourist may purchase any number of *anting-antings* from peddlers on the streets of Quiapo, these are considered *patay* (without life) as they have been purchased and therefore possess no spiritual powers.

A common Western misconception associates *anting-antings* with religion proper. St. Claire, a Spaniard, states that *anting-antings* are the "remnants of what was once what might be called the religion of the peoples of the Philippines."[10] This is a broad statement which reflects the Spaniard's misunderstanding of the Philippine natives during the former's stay in the archipelago. Conversely, Anima, a Filipino, asserts that "to associate the

anting-anting with religion is somehow ridiculous and absurd. The only thing that these two have in common is their 'power to protect its possessor from danger.' Aside from this, they travel separate paths toward opposite goals."[11] Although it is not traditionally associated with official Islamic or Catholic doctrine, the belief in *anting-antings* is woven syncretically into these faiths by the *mandirigma*, creating a sort of martial folk religion. The Filipino warrior's belief in the power of spirits to protect him through the use of amulets and talismans, blessed with prayers and patron saints, becomes his expression of these world religions. Moreover, as Reid notes: "The prayers of both the scriptural religions have been widely incorporated into rituals of propitiation of spirits; Islamic and Catholic leaders tactfully leave important ceremonies after having said their prayers, so as not to witness rituals they could not approve."[12]

It was the cunning of the Spanish friars who saw religion as a way to unify, subdue, and hence conquer the Philippine natives. They could "sell" the natives on the "idea" of Catholicism by producing and dispersing amulets featuring Christian symbolism and the figures of their saints conquering evil. It is interesting to note that on one such amulet is pictured a scene featuring Saint Michael, holding a sword above his right shoulder, mounted on horseback and trampling the devil. In "classical" systems of eskrima, the strike which originates from right shoulder and ends at the left hip has become known as *tagang San Miguel* (the strike of St. Michael). From this it is easy to see how such talismans have come to be mistakenly considered part of religion. Although it is not a part of religion proper, *anting-antings* are a distinctive expression of the *mandirigma's* past and present belief in the power of the spiritual and religious worlds to effect his ability to perform in hand-to-hand combat, and hence the outcome of his battles.

A concept often associated with the Moros of the southern Philippines (but certainly not unique to them) is *parang sabil,* or the waging of war in the name of God. It refers to a jihad, or "holy war," against those who threaten the existence and spread of Islam. It is a religious rite enjoined in the *Qur'an* which is resorted to only when all other forms of organized resistance fail. Khadduri notes that jihad were "employed as an instrument for both the universalization of religion and the establishment of an imperial world state."[13] In contemporary Islamic Filipino society, *parang sabil* has become a generic term for the folk epics that express their struggles against the genocidal Christian Spanish colonizers.

The jihad, reflecting the normal adversarial relations existing between Muslim and other, was the state's instrument for transforming the *dar al-harb* (abode of war) into the *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam).[14] It indeed reaffirmed the basis of inter-group relationships by institutionalizing war as part of the Muslim legal system and made use of it by transforming war

into a "holy war" designed to be ceaselessly declared against those who failed to become Muslims.[15] This, not unlike the Christian Crusades or the Spanish occupation of the Philippines.

In its proper form, jihad consist of ritually giving notice of the intent to attack, offering the infidel the option of conversion to the Islamic faith or death. To this end, the *Qur'an* expressly states: "Say to the unbelievers, if they desist from their belief, what is now past shall be forgiven them." If they do not repent, the *Qur'an* demands: "Oh True believers, wage war against such of the infidels as are near you." And further: "When ye encounter the unbelievers, strike off their heads until ye have made a great slaughter among them." Since the jihad is Allah's direct way to paradise, by thus participating in it the individual achieves salvation.

However, among the Moros of Sulu and Mindanao the jihad developed into a degenerative form of "ritual suicide," known as *juramentado.* Thus, waging a holy war became an individual matter rather than a group dynamic.

In the Moro dialect, these men were known as *magsabils,* or those who endure the pangs of death. The Moro who decided upon *juramentado* took the solemn oath *(napi),* to prepare himself to pursue the *parang-sabil,* or road to Paradise, with valor and devotion. The candidate was then clothed in a *jubba* (white robe) and was crowned with a white *pattong* (turban). To the waist was attached an *anting-anting,* to ward off the blows of the enemy. The genitals were bound tightly with cords. After beautifying and polishing his weapons, the candidate was ready to go forth to the holy war.

The method of attack of the *juramentado* was to approach the largest group of Christians possible and shout to them from a distance with the Arabic phrase, *"La ilaha il-la'l-lahu"* (There is no God but Allah). The *kris* or *barong* was then unsheathed and a rush was made, each *juramentado* hoping to kill at least one Christian before he found a martyr's death. The Muslims who die in the struggle are pronounced *shahid* (martyrs) and automatically gain a place in *sulga* (heaven).

Following his final collapse on the battlefield, the dead *juramentado* was washed again and wrapped in a white cloth for burial. If the enemy was vanquished in the attack and the *juramentado* escaped with his life after slaughtering the Christians, he passed to Paradise forty years after the battle.

Reid suggests that having "failed to understand this religious dimension, the Spaniards and the Americans have reduced this concept into a psychological disorder, and have referred to the *shahid* as *juramentados* and *amoks,* respectively."[16] Hurley echoes this sentiment and notes that the *juramentado,* as a degenerative form of the jihad, is an act observed only in the Philippines.[17] Apparently, the Moros of Sulu and Mindanao were more enthusiastic than religious in their adherence to the ritual scripture.

For example, the *Qur'an* expressly states that "giving due notice to the enemy in this case is indispensibly requisite in such a manner that treachery may not be induced, since this is forbidden." And further: "If a Muslim attack an infidel without previously calling him to the Faith, he is an offender because this is forbidden." Yet the *juramentado* of Mindanao and Sulu killed treacherously and without warning.

It is little wonder, then, that the *juramentado* Moros of Sulu and Mindanao take their place among the most deadly combatants in the history of hand-to-hand combat; he was practically unstoppable. Even when riddled with bullets he remained on his feet to kill his enemy.

The utter disregard for death held by the Moro *juramentado* probably remains unequaled in history. In Mindanao and Sulu, we have the astounding picture of a race of men who sought death as a blessing. And with little wonder, for they were informed by the *Qur'an:* "And say not of those who are slain in fight for the religion of God, that they are dead; yea they are living, but ye do not understand."

Often confused with the practice of running *juramentado* is the custom, so prevalent among Southeast Asian people, of running *amok*. Running *amok* has no religious significance, and is called *manuju* by the Moros. This practice occurs when a native has what is called a "bad head," which finds him temporarily insane. The Malay, for example, is prone to manifest imaginary ills and this culminates in the seizure of a *kris* and a mad slashing of every person in his path. Even the Moros are not spared when in the path of an *amok*. Moreover, Nakpil notes "that contemporary Filipino psychiatrists say that the behavior aberration is probably brought on . . . by environmental conditions, and that it is the very cultural pattern of repressing hostile feelings and dissembling all disagreement that leads to the breaking point: a homicidal mania, really a form of suicide with the victim . . . turning against the whole world until he himself is killed."[18]

Psychological Framework

There are a great many stories of Filipino warriors who single handedly defeated a dozen armed men in hand-to-hand combat. These stories, however, do not indicate the warrior's extraordinary fighting skills as a result of dedicated training; rather, they have a tendency toward the supernatural. Conversely, although aided by *orasyones* and *anting-antings, mandirigma* are noted for their magnified sense of self and belief in their spirit-given physical abilities, particularly after emerging victorious in hand-to-hand combat or from a *patayan*. Navarro notes a concept called *gilas*—the unison of mind, body, and spirit into one tripartite functioning unit.[19] It is believed that during the times of the ancient Bothoan, *mandirigma* developed *gilas* through their daily practice of sword-fighting which reflected the realization that death confronts the warrior during every physical encounter. The *mandirigma* practiced focusing his gaze at a single point (e.g., an opponent's forehead, or the left side of his chest) for extended periods of time without blinking. When fighting, the trajectory of a *mandirigma's* weapon often changes. This, coupled with unpredictable movement and varying distance of the hands—thus confusing depth perception—makes it nearly impossible to follow the offensive path of an oncoming weapon attack. Mastery of single-point concentration allowed the *mandirigma* to focus his intention, quiet his mind, and face his opponent as a whole comprised of mind, body, and spirit.

Training sessions in Filipino martial arts are structured to gradually prepare the practitioner for combat. As training progresses from blunt wooden weapons, to sharp bladed ones, a metamorphosis takes place as the practitioner transforms into a warrior. To the extent that the Filipino warrior was able to perform the requisite techniques of blocking, countering, and disarming of an armed opponent, it is easy to see how he would naturally develop a high level of self-confidence. This greater self-confidence, accompanied by the belief that one will be protected by the spirit world through the possession of *anting-antings* and recitation of *orasyones,* creates a sense of self-importance that far exceeds the norm. The *mandirigma* was not considered arrogant; an elevated sense of self-importance was necessary to maintain his fighting spirit and the mental state necessary to engage in combat (even when greatly outnumbered) at any time. The *mandirigma* was respected by his fellow countrymen, and elevated in society as he embodied the ethos of a martial heritage in part responsible for the Philippines' ultimate freedom from oppressive foreign control.

There exists another concept embedded in the psychological framework of the *mandirigma* known as *dakip-diwa* (awareness without consciousness; literally, "to catch the spirit"). As Galang notes: "The alertness of the Filipino warrior, or *mandirigma,* is not a natural talent but a skill honed and cultivated to its highest degree. The ability of the *mandirigma* to nullify the unexpected is the product of rigorous and serious training and dedication."[20] *Dakip-diwa,* then, is a somewhat more tangible approach to fighting as it deals with an area over which the warrior has complete control. The *mandirigma's* ability to overcome an opponent using qualitative technical skills and superior reflex-control and coordination is maximized through forging the proper frame of mind.

At the onset of a physical confrontation the Filipino warrior "catches the spirit" invoked through *orasyon* and *anting-anting,* and enters into *dakip-diwa.* Instantaneously, his unconscious mind begins to control every movement, breath, thought, and emotion. The warrior, when under the

Floro Villabrille

psychological control of *dakip-diwa,* no longer sees himself as facing an opponent who possesses the physical attributes of strength, speed, or timing. Rather, he faces only the concept of combat itself: angles of attack, uncertainty, and death. Under this premise the warrior relies on his honed skills to control offense and defense (timing and rhythm, angles and trajectories) to take advantage of opportunities, to create illusions, and to overwhelm his foe. Under the guidance of a true master, and through proper training, the *mandirigma* overcomes his weaknesses by training his mind and body to expect the unexpected and condition his unconscious reflexes to react appropriately. It is this mental-edge of the Filipino warrior that enables him to defeat multiple opponents. A clear and focused mind overrides the ability of an opponent to break the warrior's spirit in combat. *Dakip-diwa,* then, eliminates those fears that cause hesitation, which could ultimately lead to his death. The *mandirigma* fully expected to be wounded (if not die) in battle, and this allowed him to eliminate the fear causing hesitation.

With regard to such an ethos, a Tagalog maxim states: *"Ang bayani nasusugatan nagiibayo ang tapang"* (The hero when wounded releases his courage). Moreover, among the warriors of the Visayas, it was believed that a man dies nine times. Upon his final death, he goes to a place called *Sayar* where he is greeted by his ancestors who are armed with spear and shield. Demetrio further notes that in everyday life the Moros practice sacrificial rituals to appease the *anitos* so that they will intercede for the dead warrior when he faces *Bathala* (God).[21]

Another concept found in the psychological framework of the Filipino warrior is his specially developed skills in visualization *(maglarawan).* There is a story regarding the late Grandmaster Floro Villabrille, who, prior to facing his last opponent in a challenge match in Hawaii, spent some time in quiet, visualizing himself repeatedly knocking down his opponent. He claimed that his ability to visualize his opponent's defeat before the actual fight gave him the strength, courage, and will to fight until his opponent was unconscious. Villabrille won this match but claims that had he not already been victorious in his mind prior to the fight, he would have lost.

The practice of visualization is nothing new to the *mandirigma.* On a basic level visualization practices are used by some masters as a teaching tool. The late Grandmaster Angel Cabales, for example, was known to have taught several students these skills as a way to correct their physical fighting techniques when Cabales could not be present. They were to visualize Cabales in a posture, then visualize themselves in the same posture and overlap the two. Where the student's body position was out of place he could adjust it in his mind to follow Cabales' model. When the student next worked out his positioning was invariably better than before.

Techniques of visualization are a mainstay in the practice of Filipino martial arts. It is quite common to watch a master move or react suddenly to a seemingly non-existent attack. The attack, while not occurring on the physical plane did, however, genuinely occur in the master's mind's eye. Many top exponents of Filipino martial arts daily visualize themselves in combat situations. Their minds are never at rest as they are mentally, psychologically, and physically preparing for an encounter at all times. In this way it is believed that the Filipino warrior will never be caught off-guard because his mind is always in tune with combat.

6

Structure, Rites, and Symbols

This thou must always bear in mind,
what is the nature of the whole,
and what is thy nature,
and how this is related to that,
and what kind of a part it is
of what kind of whole.
—MARCUS AURELIUS

Introduction

Anthropology focuses on, among other things, the nature of the social structure and its relationship to the individual. There are many ways in which this manifests itself in the martial arts, such as in the relationships among peers, between student and teacher, and between master and disciple. A society is a system of social positions expressed in the relationships between statuses, roles, and offices. Although itself a subculture of the Philippines Island identity, Filipino martial arts can be thought of as a cohesive martial culture made up of various subcultures (the forms of martial arts and martial sports). Led by individual masters, these systems are able to function within the realm of the Filipino martial arts society as a whole. This coexistence is achieved by way of the ideology of Filipino martial culture at large, and is often determined and reinforced through the social situation (e.g., the taking or teaching of a martial arts class; sport competition) in which the practitioner of the Filipino martial arts finds himself. The socialization process includes methods by which an individual

acquires and assimilates the patterns, norms, values, and practices of a given culture, in this case a warrior culture.

These individuals (or actors, as they are known to the social scientist) interact with one another on many levels. The role of the martial arts practitioner is in a state of perpetual flux. Change occurs based on the practitioner's evolving relationship with other practitioners of the arts (e.g., another's junior, senior, instructor, or master), who are sharing in the common activity (e.g., learning, coaching, or instructing the martial arts). Although the activities that form the purpose and framework of the social interaction may remain unchanged, the participant's relevance to these activities indeed changes. Change occurs as the aspirant progresses in physical skill, and thus rank and seniority, within a given martial arts system, school, or organization. With the development of skills and knowledge comes a number of rites of passage that must be undertaken in order to be initiated into the next rank, thus elevating one's status, role, and position in the martial arts society.

Social Structure, Status, and Titles

People are drawn to the martial arts for a variety of reasons including self-defense, physical fitness, and sport competition. Donohue suggests that this attraction may be related to symbolism, mortality, and the quest for both control and identity. He suggests that the act of controlled (e.g., nonlethal) sparring is a symbolic encounter with ancient life-and-death combat in battle. Moreover, as a result of face-to-face interaction with other participants within the martial arts group, one derives a sense of belonging and identity.[1]

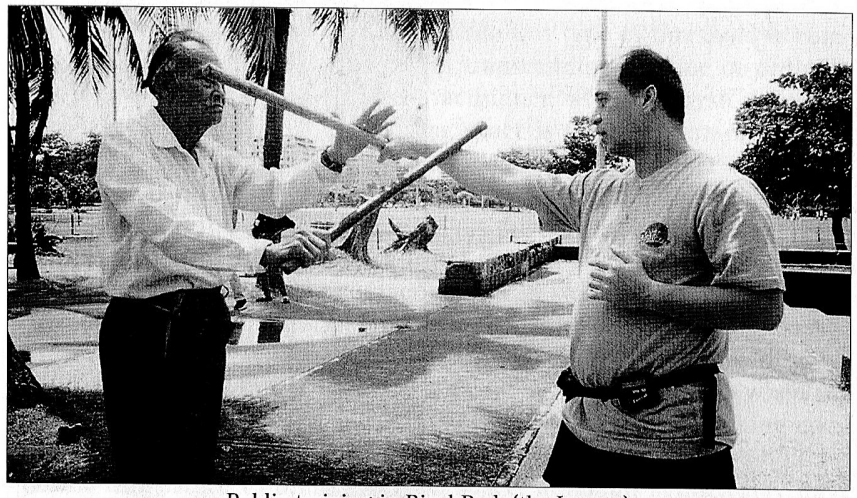
In ancient times, the Philippine natives were forced to adopt a martial-based lifestyle due to frequent personal, tribal, regional, and national confrontations. Filipino warriors across time and space have generally come from a lower social classes, as we would regard them today by Western standards. Yet, within the structure of accepted martial arts etiquette, a balance is met—they are able to coexist in an otherwise ethnic- and class-segregated archipelago based on their shared ethos, worldview, and common interest (e.g., the study of martial arts). The mechanism that maintains this balance of power is the social structure in the Filipino martial arts, manifested in the form of various earned status ranks and titles.

In his classic study of status in Balinese culture, Geertz observed that "nearly everyone . . . bears one or another title . . . [that] represents a specific degree of cultural superiority or inferiority with respect to each and every other one, so that the whole population is sorted out into a set of uniformly graded casts."[2] Titles associated with the Filipino martial arts are

often earned arbitrarily; requirements for the various levels are largely inconsistent from one martial arts system or organization to another. A *guro* (teacher) in one martial art may in fact know the same amount as an *estudyante* (student) in another martial art. In fact, by changing systems a practitioner may automatically be upgraded (or downgraded) in rank and its equivalent title by virtue of the different standards of the second system. Moreover, status in Filipino martial arts is, to use Geertz's term, a "prestige system." Status may be earned by either systematically advancing in rank in a particular martial art system, by competing and winning in a sport competition, by means of political affiliation, or by earning a reputation as a formidable opponent in challenge matches. More importantly, however, it is these titles which form the structure around which socialization occurs. Geertz notes that from a practitioner's title "you know, given your own title, exactly what demeanor you ought to display toward him and he toward you in practically every context of social life, irrespective of whether other social ties obtain between you and whatever you may happen to think of him as a man."[3]

The indigenous martial arts of the Philippines are quite extensive. However, when considered as a unified martial discipline, they become a physical culture made up of subcultures that are able to maintain their respective identities and central leadership while coexisting and interacting within the larger encompassing whole (e.g., the world martial arts "society"). While not always present, this harmony is generally maintained by paying due respect to the customs, attitudes, values, etiquette, and shared beliefs that bind the various indigenous Filipino martial arts together as a single functioning unit, society, or folk group. By way of example, lecture, and demonstration a martial arts master is able to instill in his disciples the attributes of integrity, perseverance, and indomitable spirit. In addition, through his example they may come to understand and subscribe to the warrior way of life.

Similar to religious movements and cult groups, Filipino martial arts have always developed and been perpetuated around the words and actions of charismatic leaders. Each martial arts system is headed by an individual known as the founder, grandmaster, or professor of the art. The martial artist places his faith and often unquestioning loyalty in the hands of his "master." A duality exists as these practitioners also place their faith in a God. The latter, however, is not a prerequisite to participating or advancing in the arts. At the onset of training the student is socialized in the proper forms of respect toward his seniors, proper methods of addressing other students and instructors, the regulations of the training area and rules of conduct, in addition to skills in fighting. This ideal of respecting one's seniors or elders in the arts seems to be an underlying ethic found in



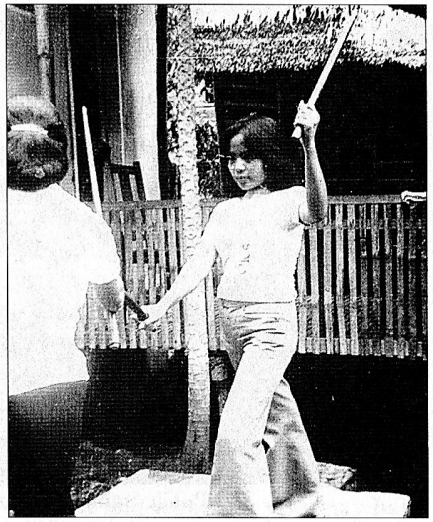
Public training in Rizal Park (the Luneta)

all martial arts, tribal structures, law enforcement, and military groups in the Philippines. It must be noted, however, that although a high degree of respect is given to the master by the student, it is often initially given out of the student's fear of the master's reputation based on his surviving in "death match" challenges (i.e., as a contemporary warrior), and initially (if ever) has little to do with respect for him as a person.

What becomes immediately apparent to the beginning student is the reverence with which the members of a given martial art hold not only their master, but for their martial arts systems on the whole, and the designated area and time in which training occurs. Such a time and space is often held "sacred" as the master's time is valuable and must not be wasted by the students. Moreover, in showing due respect to the art and its heritage, the training area must be kept clean and a serious attitude must be maintained while in it.

Sacred Time and Space

For socialization to occur in the martial arts (e.g., the unfolding of the various dimensions of the discipline to the participants), there must be a designated time and place where individuals gather to share in the common activity (e.g., training). For the Filipino martial arts practitioner the time is generally arbitrary, while the place is often a public park, such a "the Luneta" (Rizal Park) in Manila, or a more secluded area such as the master's backyard. While some Filipino martial arts masters do own and operate commercial clubs, the majority of these offer instruction in martial



Private training in a master's backyard

arts other than those indigenous to the Philippines. Many of the high-ranking practitioners of Filipino martial arts still hold their art as being *mana*, and as the "sacred" knowledge which gave the Filipinos their ability to overcome oppression. Therefore, for the martial arts practitioner time and space are not homogeneous; there exists a sacred time to receive, and a sacred space in which to participate in, the acquiring of sacred (i.e., warrior) knowledge.

In fact, Eliade suggests that, "sacred space possess existential value . . . for nothing can begin, nothing can be done, without a previous orientation—and any orientation implies acquiring a fixed point. . . . The discovery or projection of a fixed point—the center—is equivalent to the creation of the world."[4] The "center" for the dissemination of martial arts knowledge is the training area, which is defined by the presence of the master, while "creation" in the martial context involves the forging (or creating) of a master from a novice student through various stages and transmissions of knowledge. In his discussion of sacred and profane space, Eliade observed that there is always a threshold which separates the two and which must be crossed in order to move into a different mode of being. In fact, it is "the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds [e.g., the warrior way of life and that of the layman]—and at the same time the paradoxical place where those worlds communicate, where passages from the profane to the sacred world become possible."

A good example of the sort of threshold Eliade is referring to is the doorway that opens into a church, physically separating sacred and profane space for the religious believer. While this type of threshold is common it is not the only mechanism for transcending profane or ordinary space. For the Filipino martial arts practitioner, where a physical door or even a room indicating sacred training space is the exception rather than the rule, other "intangible" thresholds exist. In the example of training held in "the Luneta," the coming into an established training time with the master becomes the threshold as it moves the student's mental state from an ordinary person into a martial arts practitioner embarking on a warrior's path. Moreover, coming into contact with other students, teachers, or masters automatically constitutes a threshold because the practitioner must at once place himself in an appropriate social position as determined by his peers and seniors who are present. A threshold is also crossed when the practitioner puts on his training uniform (if one is used) or the taking up of his training weapons. Each of these examples constitutes the threshold for moving into sacred training time and space, although neither may have been specially designated or planned.

Eliade further notes that "the experience of sacred space makes possible the 'founding of the world': where the sacred manifests itself in space, the real unveils itself, the world comes into existence . . . for the 'center' renders orientation possible."[5] Thus, the transmission of sacred knowledge in sacred time and space effects physical and psychological changes in the martial arts practitioner. The student at once "finds" himself while persevering through hard and demanding practice and sparring sessions and by passing through various rites of passage and initiation. The "real" unveils itself in the applied skills of the student as he perfects them in training and through sparring. As the student progresses in rank along the martial social structure, he becomes oriented to the world in which he lives—and in a sense "finds" himself. He is no longer a layman but a martial arts practitioner on his way to becoming a *mandirigma,* a warrior. Eliade's analysis of the religious man suggests that he becomes unable to live in profane space, for it is in sacred space that he "participates in being" and that he "has a real existence." Interestingly, the life histories of the martial arts masters presented in Part Four indicates that this is also the case with the contemporary Filipino warrior. The martial arts practitioner can generally be found wearing a T-shirt or logo that identifies the system, school, or organization to which he belongs, thus existing in sacred space at all times. Martial arts practitioners also often choose to converse only about their chosen discipline and often carry various amulets or weapons on their person at all times. These items, then, are symbolic representations of the threshold between sacred and profane space. By always identifying with such things they become metaphors for a continuous existence in sacred time and space, making possible a perpetual state of orientation.

Rites of Passage, Liminality, and Communitas

Culture and personality are ethnographs of experience. Culture and tradition are performance, living expressions of what people do, say, and think. Rites of passage, as an essential part of this culture and tradition, result in a transformation between states of being. We must look at what happens in the moment, for rites of passage are a lived experience rather than abstract stages. And it is in these moments of lived experience that the participant uncovers his true self and affixes his orientation to the world.

While of primary importance in traditional societies, rites of passage are practically nonexistent in the Western world. Those that do exist are primarily linked to structured religious initiation rituals that have all but removed the elements of danger and the unknown—symbols of passage rites proper. Victor Turner's extensive work, however, demonstrates that indigenous societies emphasize rituals of death, rebirth, and initiation, as symbolically portrayed through rites of passage. Moreover, unlike an individual's vision quest, passage rites are often collective experiences.

Rites of passage consist of various communal ceremonies that often mark changes in social status an individual or group may go through between the various stages of life. Turner notes that passage rites can be violent or euphoric, but generally mark some predetermined biological or cultural change.[6] As part of the ritual, initiates are never certain that they will successfully arise from the passage rite. Elements of unrecognized danger lead Turner to talk about violence as a "liminal" state of "being" in "anti-structure." Participants metaphorically earn their new status by way of a single or series of initiation rites.

In his classic work, *Les Rites de Passage,* folklorist Arnold van Gennep determined that all rites of passage are marked by three phases: separation, margin or "limen," and aggregation.[7] This three-stage process is often metaphorically described as "death and rebirth." The individual in one category symbolically "dies" and is "reborn" into a new category.

To further our understanding of structure, rites, and symbols in relation to the Filipino martial arts, it is useful to examine the rituals and symbols of the Bakbakan International organization. Bakbakan is one of the few martial arts organizations in the Philippines that still symbolizes the ethos and worldview of the Filipino warrior. In fact, the term *bakbakan* refers to a "free-for-all" fight; the Bakbakan motto, *matira matibay,* designates one as being the "best of the best." In effect, Bakbakan members advertise that they are unbeatable in a no-holds-barred fight, and are committed and required to support their claim at any time and place if challenged. As such, membership in the organization is held in high regard and receiving a rank promotion is extremely difficult. The religious, spiritual, and fraternal heritage of the Philippines is evident in the symbols and rites adopted by Bakbakan. Bakbakan's values and principles are expressed in the ritual order in which members pledge their allegiance, loyalty, and obedience to God, to country, and to the Bakbakan brotherhood respectively. The ideals of Bakbakan are embodied in its three-step salutation which emphasizes *karunungan* (knowledge), *katapatan* (loyalty) and *katarungan* (truth—in life and in combat). For a student to be able to progress to the level of instructor and be able (and willing) to display such a challenging symbol and statement on his person, he must successfully emerge from a series of predetermined passage rites.

The Bakbakan International Gathering, 1994

In the more complex of traditional societies, Turner notes that the roles accorded to rituals, in their ability to draw individuals and groups together in performances that call for harmony and cooperation, is significant. He suggests that an appropriate dependence on kinsmen, neighbors, and community is a pervading theme of many rituals. Each year, Bakbakan members from around the world gather for an annual meeting in Metro Manila. This meeting marks a time for members to renew friendships, strengthen social ties, and participate in ritual rank promotional examinations. Students and instructors alike must train diligently throughout the year as they may be called upon to participate in the rites of the promotional testing during the annual gathering. Before being asked at the meeting, students are generally unaware of who will be called upon to test their skills.

Turner notes that separation, the first stage of passage rites, "comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group

either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a 'state'), or from both."[8] In terms of Bakbakan promotional testing, individuals are chosen based on the extent to which their skills have increased since the previous year's meeting. Once the individuals are named to participate in the testing they are required to participate in the passage rites.

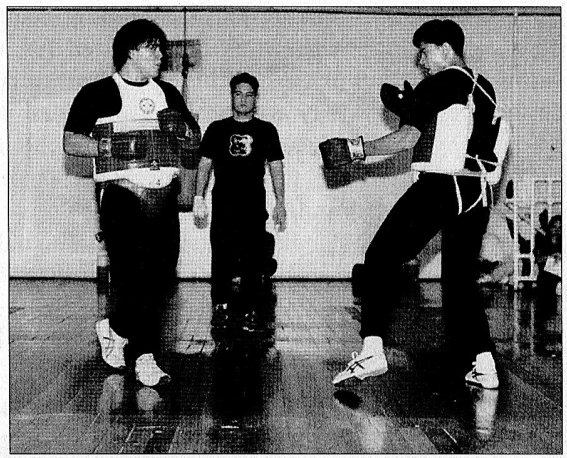
The second stage of rites of passage marks a period of transition in which the individual or group is in limbo. During this "liminal" period, ritual initiates are generally separated from the rest of society. The chosen individuals go off by themselves for an undefined period of time (which may range from a few hours to a few days) in which to practice and perfect their skills in preparation for the physically grueling examination to come. Their characteristics are ambiguous as they pass into a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or future state. In other words, the "passengers" are no longer in one status (as defined by rank) and not yet in another.

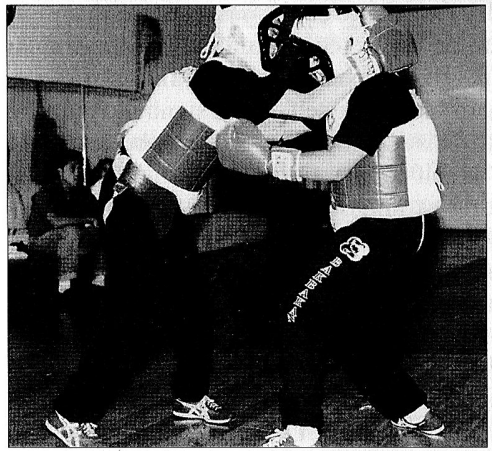
The social aspect of collective liminality is known as communitas. Turner defines communitas as "a relationship between concrete, historical, idiosyncratic individuals. Along with this direct, immediate, and total confrontation of human identities, there tends to go a model of society as homogeneous, unstructured communitas, whose boundaries are ideally coterminous with those of the human species."[9] The ideology of communitas involves an intense community spirit, a feeling of great social solidarity, equality, and togetherness. It dispels the notion of "us and them" in favor of the communal "me and you."

Liminality and communitas are attributes of passage rites proper, and are important in the study of culture and society. Liminal initiates are neither here nor there; they are "betwixt and between" the positions assigned and arranged by law, custom, etc. These attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. Moreover, liminality may be marked ritually and symbolically by the reversal of ordinary behaviors; the ritual initiates no longer hold status and are no longer bound by the customs of their previous position.

In Bakbakan promotional examinations, the ritual initiates are required to participate in ten rounds of continuous full-contact sparring. Sparring matches are conducted in a predetermined way: all rounds are two minutes in duration; at the onset of each round the initiate is faced with a new or "fresh" opponent; all opponents must be of higher rank than the initiate testing; for instructor-level tests, the first five rounds are fought against single opponents and the last five rounds against multiple opponents. For a ritual initiate to be considered for promotion to the senior instructor rank, he is required to fight a designated number of rounds in each of three

Empty-hand sparring during a Bakbakan test





Grappling sparring during a Bakbakan test

Stick sparring during a Bakbakan test

martial categories: boxing and kickboxing, grappling, and weapons sparring. Depending on the rank being tested for, it does not matter if the initiate defeats all or most of his opponents during the testing procedure. In fact, given that they are above his pre-ritual rank it is unlikely that the initiate will win. Rather, it is important that the initiate show a strong will and perseverance during the rounds. He must never back down and must always hold his ground. It is believed that if this can not be achieved under these "controlled" conditions then the individual will be unable to do so under the less-than-ideal conditions of a street fight or challenge match. Those initiates who are unable to continue the sparring matches for whatever reason (e.g., fear; lack of endurance) are automatically failed and must repeat the test the following year.

During the promotional testing the various social distinctions that existed in the initiates' previous position are disregarded, and those forthcoming at the culmination of the third stage of the passage rites have yet to be assumed. Within communitas all are equal and experience similar treatment and conditions. Through its moments of anti-structure, communitas leads to the finding of one's true self. It is a symbolic journey, a "performance," a "becoming." This liminal state is a symbolic test of one's moral being as a process of self-discovery through which the ritual initiates grow. Liminality, existing as anti-structure, allows reinterpretation of the participants' life. They are no longer students but "becoming" instructors; they are no longer men but "becoming" warriors. They simultaneously uncover their weaknesses, confront their fears, and discover who their true selves are.

Rites of Initiation and Status Elevation

Turner found that every ritual initiate goes through a humbling experience. It is during such an experience that the danger of excessive self-assertion in the new status is countered by a stern reminder that no one is autonomous but is always dependent upon others in his society or culture. For Bakbakan ritual initiates, the rites of initiation and status elevation are traditional and formulated to give value and meaning to each momentous and significant step toward mastery of the martial arts that a full-fledged Bakbakan member undergoes. The rites are conducted under the supervision of an appointed rites master and several other martial arts instructors acting in various roles—this is done to preclude the possibility of the ritual becoming something akin to hazing.

During the initiation rites, ritual initiates (one at a time) stand facing two lines of instructors on either side of him. Ritual strikes known as *hataw* are delivered by the instructors with a doubled black belt, triple-rolled at

Hataw, initiation rite of Bakbakan International

the open end, and knotted. Each instructor delivers full-powered strikes to the initiate's stomach, the number of which is indicated by the number of ranks the instructor is above the initiate. This is a final test of endurance, perseverance, and faith for the ritual initiates. Once successfully completed, the initiates move on to the third stage of the rites of passage.

The third and final stage of the passage rites is one of reincorporation, in which the ritual initiates are ceremonially merged back into the martial arts society, but this time in a new status. Turner suggests that at this point the ritual initiates are once again in a stable or oriented position, with new rights and obligations in relations to others of a clearly defined and "structured" sort. The new initiate is once again expected to act in accordance with the excepted norms, values, and ethics that maintain the organization as a system of such interacting positions. In the third and culminating stage of the ceremony, the initiate is often given a new name or title that symbolically marks the birth of a different kind of person, allocated a different status. In terms of symbolic representation of rank, Bakbakan members who successfully emerged from the rites of passage indicate their new elevated status by way of a colored belt and corresponding certificate of rank and title. The colored belts are in effect an heirloom passed down from previous initiates, as the practitioners return the belts at the onset of each new promotional examination. This also helps to foster a sense of community and cohesion among members of the organization, as they are wearing a belt with a heritage—a symbolic metaphor of the passage rites and the previous initiates who successfully emerged from them.

Symbols, Metaphors, and Meaning

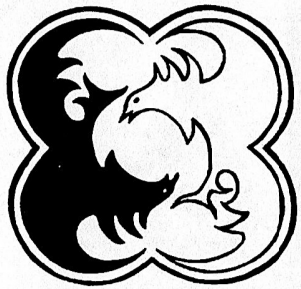
A symbol is a "thing regarded by general consent as naturally typifying or representing or recalling something by possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought."[10] Bakbakan International maintains two symbols (or logos) that identify the organization, its ethos, and worldview. First, is the *sabong,* or "fighting cocks/double phoenix" logo, which is the official symbol of the organization. Bakbakan members wear the *sabong* symbol on their uniforms as a visible reminder of man's constant struggle to master and control the dialectical forces within himself, between himself and others, and the quest to attain perfect union with others and ultimately with the Creator. The use of the *tatak bungo,* or "death's head" logo, is limited to Bakbakan's most senior members and is an indication that the bearer of this logo has successfully proven that he is in fact "the best of the best in a free-for-all fight."

The *sabong* symbol, when seen as "fighting cocks," characterizes the life and death seriousness of hand-to-hand combat, in which there can only be one victor in any true encounter. The warrior who has disciplined and prepared himself will arise from the encounter victorious. The cock is a Christian symbol for vigilance, of preachers to the faithful, and, like the phoenix, of resurrection. It is also a symbol of the vigilance of the warrior.

The *sabong* logo, when regarded as a "double phoenix," symbolizes man and his ability to continuously learn, develop, and mature as a result of life's perpetual challenges and tests. Regardless of the nature of the trials, be it the pursuit of a career, the protection of loved ones, or the defense of one's honor, man, the living phoenix, has the ability to rise from the ashes in victory and glory.

The colored version of the double phoenix emblem is made up of the colors of the Philippine flag: red, white, blue, and gold. The phoenix is represented in red and blue colors. The red phoenix represents the warrior or the martial artist and the blue phoenix stands for the scholar or the man of peace. The double phoenix represents and identifies the dual nature of man, two faces held together in tension, but not in antagonism, as mutually interdependent and complimentary partners; one in essence, but two in manifestation. The eyes of each phoenix is the color of its opposite image. This illustrates the presence of the virtues of the man of peace in the warrior and vice-versa.

In the black and white version, the white phoenix represents good, and the black phoenix, evil. The eyes symbolize the impurity that exists in both states and represents the embryo of the other state, a reminder that man cannot achieve a perfect state. The two states are contained within the circle of cyclic revolution and dynamism, of the totality, of opposites working



Bakbakan's *sabong* (phoenix/cocks) symbol

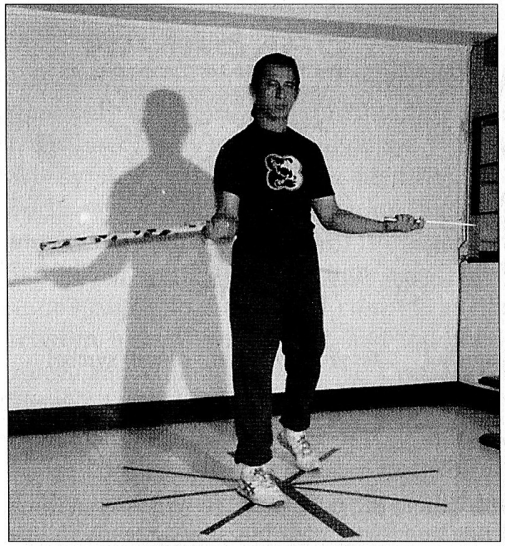
Tatak bungo (death's head) symbol

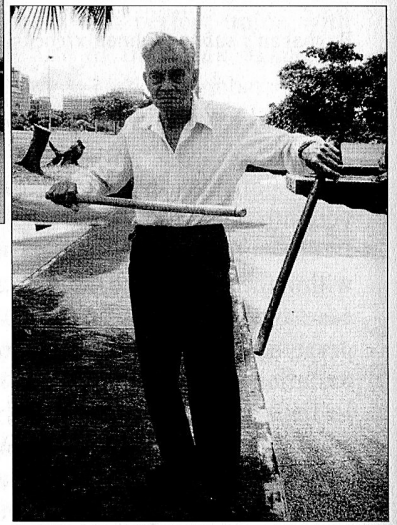
in harmony, complimenting each other; the pure essence which is neither, yet both.

The outer border keeps the double phoenix or fighting cocks enclosed within the four joined circular areas embodying the directions north, south, east, and west. The boundary of the circles creates an endless arena for the perpetual struggle between good and evil, the continuous changes and variations in combat, and the never ending conflict within man.

The secondary *tatak bungo,* or "death's head" emblem, is a visual artifact of the Katipunan revolutionary fighters and indicates that the bearer is a seasoned fighter and not to be trifled with. The skull *(bungo)* is a reminder of man's mortality and the vanity of worldly possessions. Enclosed within the symbol of the Triune God, mortal man must learn to control pride, and, instead, submit to wisdom, power, and the divine plan of God. The death's head emblem is a harsh reminder of the fixation of death as opposed to the dynamic circle of life and movement symbolized in the "double phoenix" logo. It serves as a beacon and a guide in the conduct of daily life, to be lived with honesty and integrity. As an extension of the *matira matibay* motto which surrounds this logo, Bakbakan members strive to be the "best-of-the-best" in their professional, fraternal, and domestic lives, and to be a glorifying testimony to the strength of their faith and character.

Symbols are also evident in mediums other than the spoken language. Anthropologist Marcel Mauss notes that societies and cultures store a large part of their collective thought in symbolic body gestures.[11] When a common spoken language is not available between individuals, systems of body languages can be used to provide a means to express one's feelings and intentions. In the case of Filipino martial arts, such a system of body languages exist to symbolically express the issuance of a challenge match



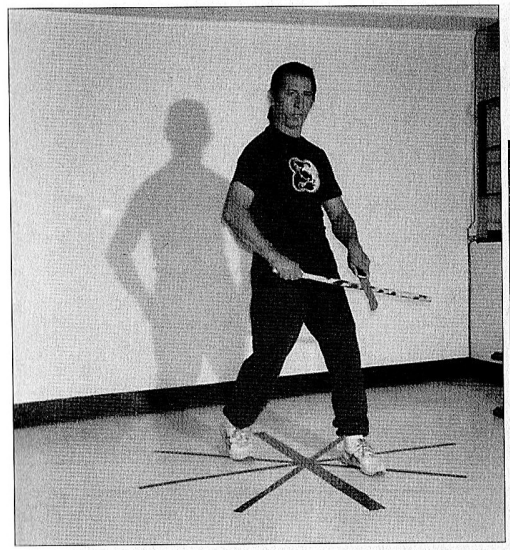


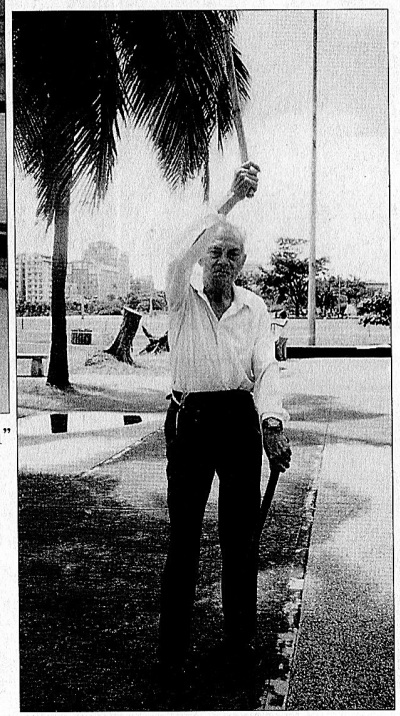
Symbolic poses indicating a "challenge-match"

from one master to another; they also provide a connection between the sacred and profane worlds.

In times past, the only way for a master to test the superiority of his art over another was to engage in a *patayan* where the superior art would be determined by the death or maiming of one (or both) of the combatants. Although "death-matches" were officially outlawed by General Douglas MacArthur in 1945, many masters continued to attempt to establish their reputations by engaging in them. This was accomplished by traveling from island to island issuing open challenges to any practitioner who would accept. Since there are over 1,700 languages in the Philippines, issuance of a challenge was communicated through a series of symbolic body postures. These postures symbolically indicated whether a practitioner wished to engage another practitioner in a "friendly test of skills," or a *patayan.*

If a challenge was accepted, the combatants would again ritually engage in a series of symbolic body postures. These postures serve a dual purpose:



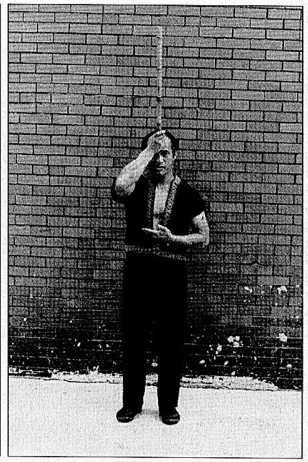


Symbolic poses indicating a *patayan* "death-match"

acting as a mechanism through which one master would pay his respects to another by way of a personalized, system-specific salutation; and acting as a physical representation of the prayer *(orasyon)* that the master was mentally reciting, in honor of the Creator or to invoke the *anito,* prior to engaging in the dialectical interaction. This combination of prayer and ritual body movements acted as a mechanism through which a metamorphosis occurred in the *patayan* participant. During this time he surrendered to God, accepting death as a reward not a punishment, and became one with the combative dance of death. At the conclusion of the ritual salutation the participant masters became warriors once again and gained access into a realm of martial-spiritual existence that few have entered.

An example of this spiritual-martial connection is found in the ritual salutation of the La Costa kali system, demonstrated here by Guro (teacher) Dan Inosanto. Accompanied by the mental recitation of an *orasyon,* each posture is symbolic of the martial-spiritual path as follows:

1



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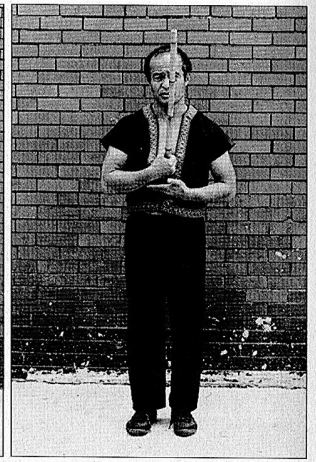


3

Orasyon: "With heaven and earth as my witness, I stand before the Creator and mankind on earth." Stand with weapon pointing down and open-hand reaching toward heaven (Fig. 1).

Orasyon: "I will strive for knowledge and wisdom with the five senses and beyond the five senses." Lower the empty-hand to the heart, while raising the handle of the weapon to the "third-eye," or mind's-eye (Fig. 2).

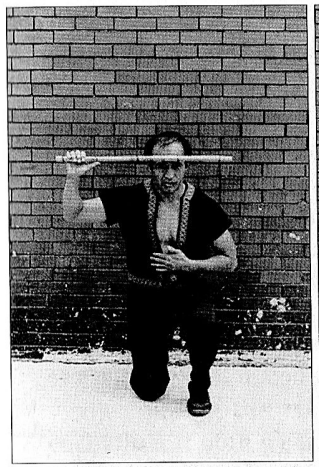
Orasyon: "I will strive for love for all mankind and there will be no shedding of needless blood." Lower the weapon until the weapon-hand rests in the empty-hand (Fig. 3).

Orasyon: "I bow not in submission but in respect to you (opponent)." Lower to the right knee while turning the weapon perpendicular to the "third-eye," and parallel to the ground (Fig. 4).

Orasyon: "I extend the hand of respect and friendship to you and I look to the Creator for divine guidance." Maintain this position while lowering the point of the weapon to the ground and extending the empty-hand toward the opponent (Fig. 5).

Orasyon: "I am trained to be a warrior with wisdom, if my peace and friendship is rejected." Next, lower the empty-hand, placing it once again over the heart, while raising the weapon-hand, placing it on the "third-eye," so that the weapon points down (Fig. 6).

Orasyon: "I stand in symbolism, for I serve only the creator, my tribe, and my family. And I owe no allegiance to any foreign king."



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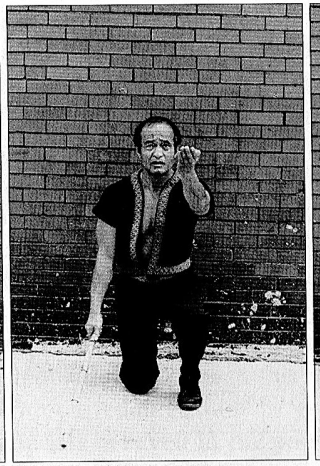

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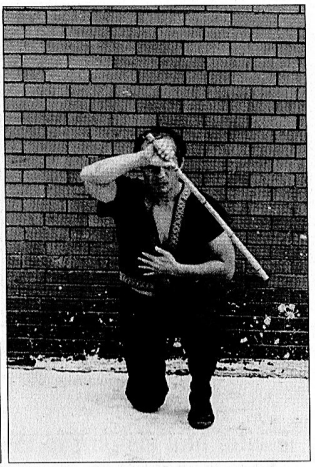

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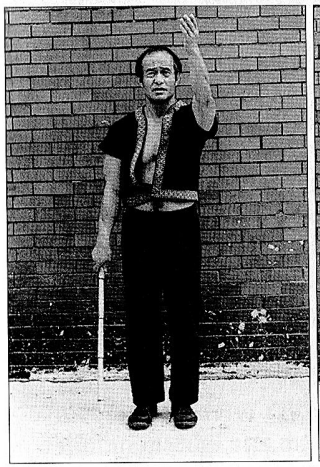

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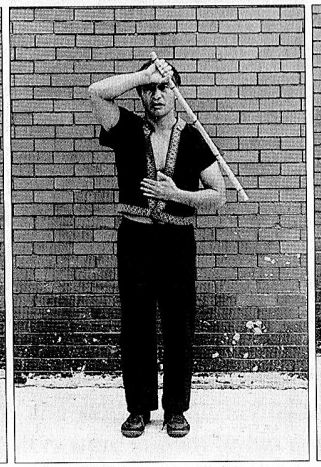

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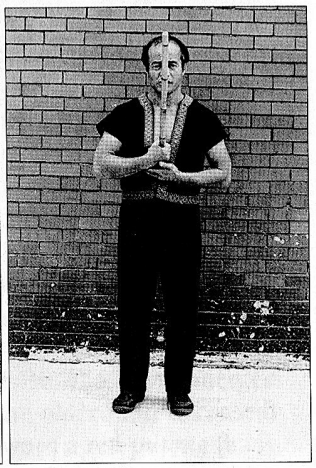

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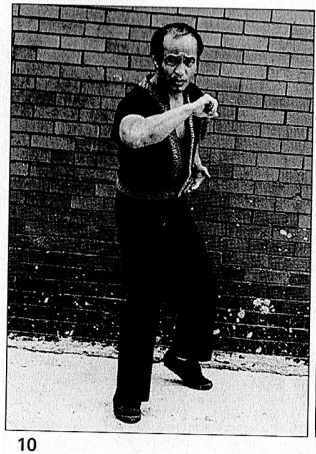
Stand up and return to the initial posture by lowering your weapon-hand toward the ground, and raising the empty-hand toward heaven (Fig. 7).

Orasyon: "With my mind, and my heart, I cherish the knowledge my instructor has given to me, for it is my life in combat." Maintain the standing position and lower the empty-hand, placing it once again over the heart, while placing the back of the weapon-hand over the "third-eye," so that the weapon points down (Fig. 8). This movement is immediately followed by lowering the weapon until the weapon-hand rests in the empty-hand (Fig. 9).



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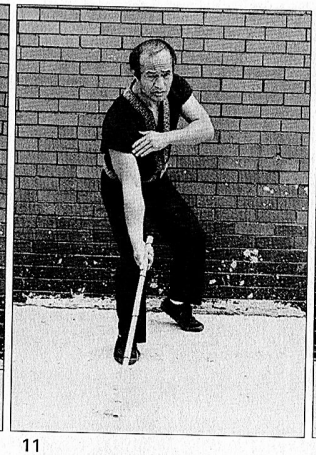

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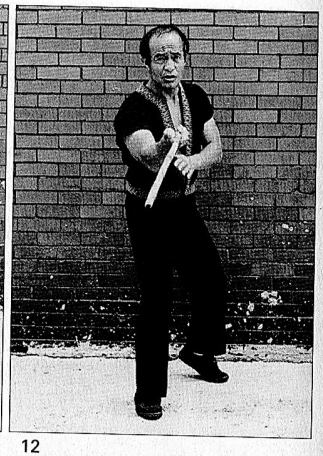

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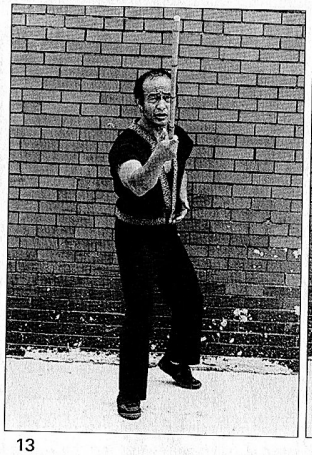

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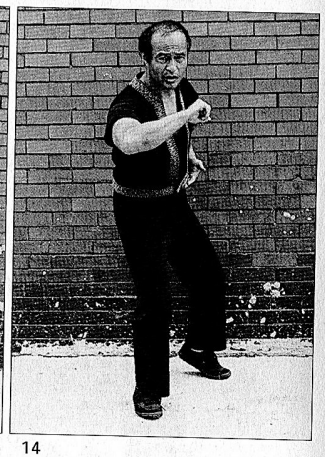


14

Orasyon: "And if my body falls to you in combat, you have only defeated my physical body." Step back with the left leg into a closed-guard defensive fighting stance (Fig. 10).

Orasyon: "For my fighting spirit and soul arise to the heavens, for they are unconquerable." Complete the salutation by striking down and up with the weapon, returning to the closed-guard, and ready to fight (Figs. 11-14).

Within the contemporary systems of Filipino martial arts, however, such an elaborate ritualistic salutation is uncommon. Instead, there are brief salutations of generally one or two movements that symbolize respect for one's training partner, seniors in the arts, and one's opponent—much like the karate bow and kung-fu hand-salute.

The fear of being challenged and possibly dying at the hands of one's own countryman led many practitioners into seclusion and/or clandestine training. However, should a master be discovered and challenged it was largely his physical skills that would keep him alive, aided (at least psychologically) by the possession of *orasyones* and *anting-antings*. Refusing a face-to-face challenge was not an option.

When engaged in *patayan,* the possession and belief in *orasyones* and *anting-antings* would represent *imago mundi,* or the "central image," indicating a break in sacred and profane space, as described by Eliade.[12] Thus, by extension of possessing such an amulet or prayer, the *patayan* participant is able to control the threshold between secular and divine spheres. The warrior's skill, coupled with his belief in the presence of divine intervention during the encounter, enabled him to emerge victorious in the encounter. If both participants believed in the power of prayers and talismans, then the individual who invoked the more powerful spirit would dominate.

The death match itself represents a rite of passage solely concerned with status elevation. The participants psychologically detach themselves from the rest of the world with the understanding that they may die at the hands of their opponent. The two combatants simultaneously enter into a liminal state of being, as they are no longer regarded as revered masters but as coequal performers in a dialectical dance of death. They are in a state of limbo between their previous status and the unknown conclusion that seals their fate. One will die; the other will emerge from the rite successful (albeit wounded) and be reintegrated into the martial arts society as a master and warrior of even higher status and reverence.

The color red is symbolically connected with those who have emerged from such tests of faith and skill. A number of the older (and deceased) Filipino martial arts masters were known to have worn a red *putong* (bandanna) around their temples. This privilege was reserved for those who emerged victorious from at least seven *patayan* matches.[13] In addition, among the early Filipinos, de los Reyes notes that killing was considered a virtue of the strong leader. This is apparent when he states: "A Filipino who has not killed several people had no right to wear the *putong* (a sign of valor)."[14] In ancient Filipino traditions, the color red symbolizes strength, power, and funerary practices. In fact, archaeologists have found in the Tabon caves, weapons and burial jars painted red with hermatite.[15] The symbolic connection of the color red with the *patayan* is therefore apparent.

7

Folk Performance, Festivity, and Celebration

Folklore is an echo of the past,
but at the same time it is also
the vigorous voice of the present.
—Y. M. SOKOLOV

Introduction

The relationship between dance, drama, and the martial arts in an number of Asian countries, such as India, Indonesia, and China is well known. Content of this nature is also mentioned in literary classics found in these countries. Although not widely known, similar connections can be found in the Philippines. For this reason, a further discussion of the socio-cultural significance and relevance of martial folk performance in the Philippines is warranted. Such a study, however, is predicated on one's understanding of the importance of folklore proper in society.

Folklore is a mechanism through which people express their worldview. The term *folklore* is comprised of the words *folk,* a group of people, and *lore,* various groups of items. Succinctly defined by Alan Dundes, *folk* refers to a group of people who share at least one common factor, while *lore* is an itemized list of genres that includes myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, charms, folk dance, folk drama, names, customs, and festivals.[1]

In the Philippines, the syncretic spiritual/religious ideology, with its animistic, Islamic, and Christian features, is often expressed through cultural performance. Combat systems also contribute to these forms, as Zarrilli notes "combat systems and specific combat techniques have had a profound and lasting impact on the development of cultural performance forms

through human history."[2] Such performances as the martial folk festival, drama, and dance commemorate, praise, and immortalize the warrior.

While folklore proper embodies many things, we are concerned here solely with martial culture as depicted in such expressive forms as the folk festival, folk drama, and folk dance. Smith notes that most of the world's societies designate seasonal, lunar, or calendrical times when members of a community gather and embrace their worldview and cultural identities vital to their national cohesion.[3] Filipino martial culture, as expressed in folklore, therefore has a place in shaping the underlying values upon which contemporary Filipino society rests. In fact, it acts as a mechanism through which ethos, worldview, and identity are socialized. It is hoped that a brief overview of martial folklore in the Philippines will facilitate a deeper understanding of the martial underpinnings of Filipino culture and society at large. It should be noted, however, that the actual practice and/or presentation of authentic Filipino martial arts within folk performance is not necessary to convey the message of the event. Folk performers are able to transmit the essence of such practices in their artistic, symbolic, and metaphoric performances.

Martial Folk Festival

Since ancient times, the people of the Philippines have entertained festival occasions. Filipino folk festivals are held for various reasons and occur throughout the year in ceremonial, ritualistic, religious, secular, social, and martial genres. Although some native Filipinos maintain their traditional animistic values and customs, the majority have chosen to embrace Catholicism, and to a lesser extent Islam. In response to this, Smith notes that "with the spread of Christianity . . . seasonal celebrations became more complicated. For generations, indigenous Filipino festivals have been celebrated in their authentic form. These 'pure' expressions, however, began to wane during the Spanish regime, as the natives were willing to accept the Christian dogma, but were reluctant to give up their festivals."[4]

The fourth week of August brings the annual Kagayhaan festival in Cagayan de Oro City. This festival showcases the diverse music and dance of the indigenous cultural groups which populate Cagayan de Oro. In fact, the term kagayhaan derives from a folktale of the earliest Filipino tribes that tells of two tribal enemies united through the marriage of Bagani, a Manobo warrior, and Baliwanen, the daughter of a Muslim chieftain. The conclusion, however, led to the naming of the area as Kagayhaan, a place of shame.

Originally just a small town fiesta celebrating the feast day of Santa Cruz, the T'boli tribal festival encourages the meeting of the six major

T'boli tribal festival

tribes of South Cotabato (T'boli, Ubo, Manobo, Kalagan, Maguindanao, Tasaday) and various tribes found in Davao (Tirurays, Mandaya, Surigao tribes, Langilan, Bilaan, Bagog, Mansaka). Stemming from a belief that the T'bolis once thrived in a golden age called Lem-lunay, this festival is a mechanism through which Filipinos reenergize and renew their vow of hard work in the hopes of recapturing this "golden" lifestyle. A commemorative mass is held featuring Filipino expressions of Catholic ritual. The culmination of the T'boli tribal festival features dynamic fights on horseback, demonstration of traditional and martial dances, and a number of ethnic games.

During the fourth week of July, natives gather in Bohol to showcase their provincial Boholano culture through the Sandugo festival. The festival begins with a reenactment of the blood compact between Rajah Sikatuna and Miguel Lopez de Legaspi. The festival culminates in a three-hour celebration that includes dancing and martial performance in the main streets of Tagbilaran City.

On July 24th and 25th, Filipinos gather at Dapitan, Zamboanga del Norte, to celebrate the Kinabayo festival. Celebrated annually, the Kinabayo festival is a reenactment of the Spanish-Moorish wars, particularly the battle of Covadonga. In this battle the Spanish forces under the command of General Pelagio, were able, through the intervention of Saint James, to overcome the Moors of Africa. As the majority of modern-day Filipinos have adopted Spanish Catholicism and various Eurocentric ideals, the addition of Filipino culture adds color to this reenactment. Kinabayo is a popular festival among the Christian Filipinos.

Christian festival

Reenacting the war between the Aetas and the Christians through martial dance is the focus of the Binabayani festival held in Zambales. Here, the natives believe that a bountiful harvest will result from their annual celebration of their martial history.

Held for two days during the fourth week of July, is a festival known as Sinulog sa Tanjay. Celebrated in Tanjay, Negros Occidental, it features street dancers and mock combat on horseback, commemorating the Moros who fought against Spanish oppression during Spain's colonization of the Philippines.

Nationwide on April 9th, Filipino veterans recall the battle of Bataan in the Araw ng Kagitingan festival. During World War II, the battle of Bataan was the Filipino's last stand in their fight for freedom from the Japanese imperial forces. Ceremonies are held on Mount Samat Shrine, where thousands of Filipinos fought alongside American troops in defense of Filipino freedom. Inside the shrine is the *dambana ng kagitingan* monument that honors the thousands who were killed in the battle of Bataan and its infamous "Death March."

The Filipino martial festival acts as a mechanism through which communal functions are satisfied. Perhaps the most important of these functions is the socialization of the Filipino. Generally speaking, martial festivals are one of the few occasions in which the Filipino community as a whole comes together to commemorate and pay homage to warriors of the past who fought to protect or free the Philippines from foreign rule. On these festival occasions the martial artist is able to identify himself with the much larger, encompassing Filipino community. Ironically, the martial fes-

Maranao festival

tival (and its related expressions of drama and dance) constitutes one of the few times per year in which the Filipino martial artist or festival actor will don the traditional warrior's clothing, as opposed to the Japanese karate uniform or Western athletic suit (both commonly worn by practitioners of contemporary Filipino martial arts).

The festival perpetuates Filipino legends with tales of martial prowess in the face of overwhelming odds. Festival behavior includes singing and dancing to traditional music played on indigenous instruments. The celebrants often engage in various choreographed and improvised martial movements, both armed and unarmed. Smith suggests that the festival is "the most concrete expression of collective emotions and loyalties."[5]

The martial festival celebrates many of the most significant events in Filipino history. These festivals reflect the Filipino's long history of oppression, rebellion, war, acculturation, assimilation, and ultimate national freedom. Their importance, however, lie not so much in depicting the Filipino's ability to acquire and assimilate Western ideology and culture; rather, these festivals represent a venue through which the values of the martial arts practitioner are maintained in tandem with the Filipino community at large.

In his analysis of sacred and profane time, Eliade suggests that "sacred time is reversible in the sense that, properly speaking, it is a primordial . . . time made present. Every . . . festival . . . represents the reenactment of [an] . . . event that took place in the . . . past. Participation in a festival implies emerging from ordinary temporal duration and reintegration of the . . . time reactualized by the festival itself. With each periodical festival, the participants find the same . . . time—the same that had been manifested in

the festival of the previous year or in the festival of a century earlier."[6] Specifically, the martial festival brings into the present the heroic deeds of cultural-heroes and warriors of the past through the reenactment of the historic event itself. The participants in the festival, then, share in the moment and become "contemporaries" with both the hero and the event. They are in a state of liminality "betwixt and between" the profane time from which they came and to which they will return after the festival occasion. The festival performers and participants have found common ground and formed communitas, such as Turner described.

Martial Folk Drama

Often performed during martial festivals, yet not limited to that venue, martial drama is another folk expression of Filipino martial culture. The martial dramas consist of plays commemorating Filipino heroes and their epic tales. Similar to the martial festival, this expression of drama is generally highlighted by performances of mock combat in the form of entertaining dance. As Enriquez suggests, Filipino "culture is seeded in its epics, its most ancient and pervasive stories of exceptional men, as conceived by its poets and garnished by the imagination of those who told and retold them down the years."[7]

In general, Filipino folk drama can be divided into categories that depict shamanism, heroism, romanticism, and events of great historical significance. In particular, martial drama celebrates the warrior, highlighting the culture-hero's struggle against various internal and external conflicts that have plagued the Philippines for centuries. These plays, as Dorson suggests, "solidify [the warrior's] acts of prowess and courage of which no ordinary human beings are capable."[8] Furthermore, as Enriquez notes: "The importance of [Filipino folk drama is] in the analysis of their themes as assimilated and deduced from various and conflicting versions, inasmuch as it is in the themes that we discover the values persisting in culture which affect our way of life even as identifying factors of nationality and race."[9]

Perhaps the best known culture-hero plays are those commemorating legendary feats of battle. Those memorializing the likes of Rajah Lapulapu, Sultan Cachil Kudarat, and Princess Urduja are presented throughout the Philippines, and are not confined to specific regions. In fact, Mig Alvarez Enriquez' English translation and production of these plays has received a number of international accolades. The exploits and historical significance of Lapulapu and Kudarat have been discussed earlier in this text and in numerous Filipino books. The efforts of the legendary Alin Ed Purowa, however, are less well-known, though no less significant. Purowa was misnamed Princess Urduja by the Arab scholar, Ibn Battuta.

Princess Urduja

In his culture-hero play, Enriquez portrays Urduja as an "exceedingly wise and beautiful woman, who would marry only the man who could defeat her in single combat, and little else."[10] An expert in hand-to-hand combat, Urduja was considered to possess virtually unsurpassable skill. As there seemed to be no man worthy, Princess Urduja was said to have never engaged an opponent in combat for her hand in marriage. Fluent in a number of languages and the daughter of the thirteenth century king, Rajah Dalisay, Princess Urduja became the ruler of Talamasin, Pangasinan, after personally beheading its previous leader. Urduja later went on to pirate the South China Sea and later fell in love with Cheng Ho, a Chinese seaman who sailed the seas during the reign of Emperor Ming. Despite the writer's poetic license, the root of Urduja's character was that of a woman warrior, the leader of the Pangasinan people, and the first Filipina feminist.

Perhaps the best known Filipino folk dramas are the *komedya* plays. While the basic story-line remains the same in all examples of this genre, the *komedya* has been interpreted and expressed by many international poets and playwrights, and is one of the few martial dramas found throughout the Philippines. In fact, these plays are so popular that they have been translated into a number of native languages; in Hiligaynon and Tagalog they are commonly referred to as *Moromoro* and *Sinkil,* in Cebuano they are known as *Linambay,* while, in Pampangueño they are known as *Kuraldal.*

Although its origins are unknown, it is postulated that the *komedya* is an outgrowth of the Mexican Indian's well known folk drama, *Moros y Cristianos*. This genre of drama includes tales of Charlemagne, Principe Raynaldo, the *Doce Pares de Francia* (Twelve Peers of France), and draws from the great epics of Don Juan Tinoso. However, a popular early *komedya* was written by a Jesuit named Geronimo Perez, and performed on July 15,

Sinkil drama

1637. According to Almario, this particular play dramatized the victorious campaign of Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera against Sultan Kudarat of Mindanao.[11]

Although an event in itself, the *komedya* is often performed as the highlight of town fiestas and festivals. While these plays maintain the general plot of a Christian princess falling in love with a Moro prince, they are, ironically, viewed as a form of fantasy and escape for oppressed Filipinos. Propagated by the Spanish friars to depict the superiority of the Catholic faith over the indigenous Filipino pagan beliefs, *komedya* convincingly portrayed the triumph of Christians over Muslims. The plays focus on the couple's respective families opposition to an inter-religious marriage. As the pair is committed to their love, war is inevitably declared between the Christians and the Moros. The warriors of each family then engage in *batalla* (battle), which highlights the arts of eskrima. The Muslims are finally defeated by the Christians, but, in an ironic twist, the Moro prince, in a desperate last attempt to save his love, embraces Catholicism.

Adib Majul notes that during the Spaniard's campaign to Jolo in 1876, Spanish friars increased the frequency with which the *komedya* plays were performed. This was done with the hope of inspiring "hatred among Christians against Muslims who were painted as enemies of their faith."[12]

Martial Folk Dance

An integral part of folk festival and folk drama is dance. Martial dance is an expression of folk life which has evolved naturally and spontaneously in conjunction with patterns of everyday life in the Philippines. Martial dance also reflects important historical battles and symbolically portrays

the experience of the native warrior participants. Such symbolic portrayal of events and experience is a mechanism through which Filipinos can realize a sense of pride and nationalism. Folk dances, as Friese notes, "are handed down through the years until they become a part of cultural heritage."[14] Martial dance, then, as handed down through the teaching process, becomes not only an integral part of martial arts, but of Filipino society through its martial culture. Indigenous Filipino dances are a vehicle for worshipping ancestors and Gods, mark various rights of passage, and keep alive myths and legends. Lardizabal notes that in the Philippines such dances are "essentially Malay, with recognizable strains of Hindu-Arabic, Indonesian, and Chinese—peoples with whom the early Filipinos traded."[14] Martial dances are concerned with war and the warrior and are organized into three basic types: war or fight dances, dances which commemorate warriors of times past, and dances designed specifically for solo and paired practice of Filipino martial arts.

Folk dances designed and structured specifically to train "ancient" Filipino martial arts are known as *langka.* The *langka* dances performed in Mindanao, Palawan, and the Sulu Archipelago, are dynamic, entertaining, and reminiscent of early Indonesian, Malaysian, and Chinese martial cultures. Under the umbrella term of *langka,* the warriors of the southern Philippines practice any combination of five distinct characteristic dance forms: *langka-kuntaw, langka-silat, langka-lima, langka-pansak,* and *langka-sayaw.*

Kun-tao (a.k.a., kuntaw) is a martial art from Fukien Province, China, adopted by the Samal and Tausug tribes of the southern Philippines. As a dance-oriented practice, *langka-kuntaw* is characterized by focused, snapping arm movements with evasive leaping and squatting leg and foot maneuvers. Fernando-Ambilangsa likens the characteristics of *langka-kuntaw* to the lai-ka martial art of the Shan States of Burma.[15] Although also fast-paced and graceful, the movements of *langka-silat* are not as powerful as those of *langka-kuntaw.* This is perhaps due to the general movement characteristics found in many Indonesian and Malaysian silat systems, in which relaxed movements are the mark of mastery. As a combative dance-like practice, *langka-silat* may be performed solo with the aid of visualization, or in sequence with several opponents.

Langka-lima is a martial dance which focuses on the development and use of five specific stances (*lima* means five). While this dance teaches the connections between these five stances, *langka-pansak* focuses on the perfection of postures exclusive of one another. *Langka-pansak* is characterized by slow, deliberate movements, punctuated by a momentary pause at the end of each defensive stance. In contrast, *langka-sayaw,* a martial dance from Tawitawi, is full of the dynamic movements of two opponents in a

Maranao fight dance

continuous exchange of strikes and defensive maneuvers. Initially, the dancers probe one another from a distance armed with a *taming* (circular shield) and *budjak* (lance). Upon nearing, they lay down their arms, dance around them, and perform such trickery as kicking sand into the other's face in an attempt to distract the other and be the first to retrieve one's weapons.

While *langka* dances reflect martial art movements in the Islamic regions of the southern Philippines, various tribal groups in the north, such as the Isneg, Bontoc Igorot, and Kalinga, engage in dances depicting the taking of an enemy's head. While head-hunting practices have ceased, the head-hunters are still commemorated in dance form. The Isnegs practice a dance called *say-yam,* which is closely aligned with their religious festivals and feasts. *Say-yam* is danced in celebration of the taking of an enemy's head. Led by the bravest man *(kamenglan),* the other warriors and community members alike proceed to dance around the head, which has been placed on a pole for all to see. This dance is also performed during mourning periods for the recently deceased.

Although no longer a head-hunting culture, the Bontoc perform a war dance known as *pattong* that ceremonially symbolizes the heroic deeds of head-hunting ancestors who so valiantly fought for the honor of this Igorot tribe. Similar to *pattong* is the Kalinga war dance, which symbolizes revenge taken for a warrior killed in battle. When the death in question was particularly violent, the warriors congregate, beat *bangibag* sticks together, and dance off to a designated location to discuss any reciprocal action to be taken. Known as *bendian* or *tchungas,* the Benguet war dance features warriors dancing and singing to honor the bravery of warriors past as well as the ghosts of overthrown enemies.

Based on their shared myth of the hero Prince Bantugan, the Sagayan

war dance is performed among the Maranao and Maguindanao tribes of Mindanao. Goquingco tells how Prince Bantugan, armed with sword and shield, offers his help to the Bagumbayan people in their struggle against invading Kadaraan warriors. He did this with the hope of winning the love of the princess of Bagumbayan.[16]

Mercado tells a slightly different and longer version of the epic.[17] In this version, Bantugan is the son of a Sultan Tominan-sa-Rugang, and while a small boy, a strong wind-storm erupts and carries off his sister, Inalang, to the home of Malikol Jian, the lord of the skies. In time, Bantugan grows to become the strongest and bravest warrior in the land. He owns a magic shield which shelters him from danger, and, like a magic carpet, carries him to far away places. One day he finds himself in the domain of Malikol Jian, where he demonstrates such outstanding warrior skills that he is rewarded with a wife, Inalang. Not knowing that they are siblings, they marry and bear children.

Upon Bantugan's return to Mindanao, Sultan Rugong immediately recognizes his long-lost daughter. Bantugan divorces her and leave home for a life of wandering in search of love and adventure. In time, he comes to the domain of his brother, Murong, who gives him the leadership of the army. They decide to forge an alliance with a rich and splendid territory nearby through Murong's marriage with the chieftain's daughter. But this is not accomplished without a bloody battle which Bantugan wins.

Meanwhile, Bantugan's other sister, Lawanen, is kidnapped by a rejected suitor. Her husband to be, Mabaning, is a good friend of Bantugan and together, they go into battle to rescue her. They win and a wedding is held.

Bantugan then goes to woo yet another bride: Datimbang of the Maguindanao tribe. His rival for her affection is a Spaniard, who is armed with ships, armor, and troops. A battle ensues, but the Spaniards run out of ammunition as they fire on the invulnerable Bantugan, protected by his magic shield. Bantugan then sets out to sea to face his rival head-on.

In both versions of the epic tale, martial movements of Bantugan are imitated by contemporary male dancers dressed in the traditional Maranao and Maguindanao war costumes. Depending on the venue, the tale of Bantugan may be presented in only dance form, highlighting his warrior spirit and fighting art, or as a folk drama reenacting his heroic deeds.

In the past, martial dance was viewed as a rehearsal for actual combat. As such, it was a rite and a symbol of initiation into manhood. Various unspoken symbolic movements and gestures—choreographed and improvised—centered around man's innate desire to be victorious in war—more specifically, in individual hand-to-hand combat. Such was the sign of a man, a warrior, a *mandirigma*. In general, these dances accomplished three

objectives: they trained warriors in a ritualistic way how to properly execute ordered lethal movements; they taught how to act and react in actual combat through repetition of offensive and defensive movements; and they forged a psychological framework for the Filipino warrior by establishing *dakip-diwa* and *kalaki*.

It is interesting to note that while martial dances are performed by martial arts practitioners (and dancers) in the southern Philippines, they are rarely practiced by contemporary martial artists in the central and northern islands. What is generally practiced in the Visayas and Luzon, within the framework of Filipino martial arts proper, are various solo and paired forms of prearranged fighting sequences. The technical framework of these forms has been incorporated into the Filipino martial arts from various Chinese, Okinawan, Japanese, and Korean martial arts sources. The movement-forms in this case are known by such names as *sayaw, balangkas, anyo,* and *pormas*.

8

Typology of Weapons

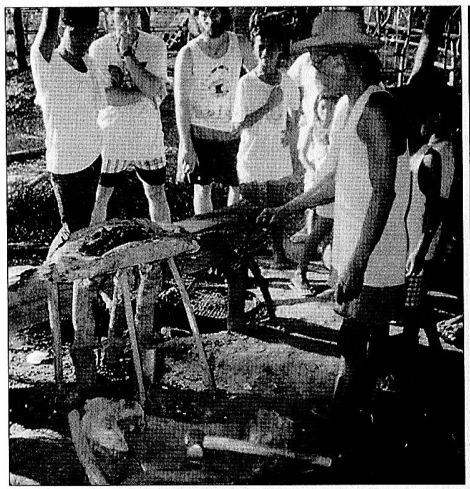
He that hath no sword, let him sell
his garment and buy one.
—ST. LUKE

Introduction

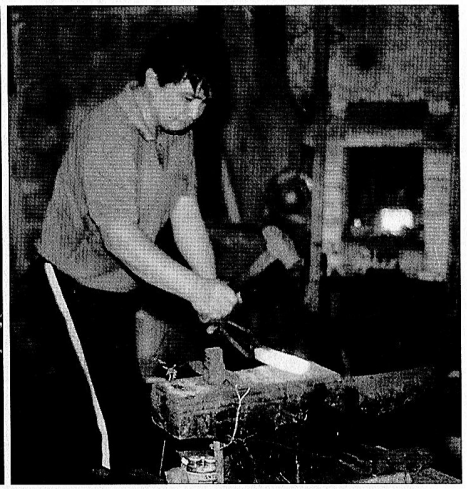
An inseparable part of the *mandirigma's* attire and an integral part of his effectiveness in battle, weapons are a mainstay in the martial culture of the Philippines. There are a vast number of weapons in the Philippines, ranging from simple in design to those with extravagant ritualistic and ceremonial ornamentation. Collectively known as *sandata,* the weapons of the Philippines are steeped in a long heritage of martial traditions stemming from Indonesia, Malaysia, India, and China. In fact, the etymology of the term *sandata* derives from the Sanskrit term *semyatta* (coming into conflict with weapons), and the Malay term *sendyatta* (ready, armed).[1] The art of studying and/or employing Filipino weapons in a structured and systematic manner is known in Tagalog as *pananandata.*

Origin and Classification of Filipino Weapons

With the dismissal of Beyer's wave migration theory, the assumption that Filipino weapons were brought to the archipelago from Indonesia and Malaysia is no longer prominent. Moreover, the archaeological record indicates that prior to the arrival of the first Indonesians and Malays in the Philippines, stone and iron weapons were in wide use. Anthropologist F. Landa Jocano notes that in archaeological sites in Masbate, Mindanao, the



Bolo maker in Marinduque



Barong maker in Manila

Visayas, and Palawan blades of knives, daggers, spear points, swords, and *bolo* were excavated, "all dated within the range of the developed phase of the iron age." [2]

Jocano suggests that the Filipino autonomously discovered a forging and smelting process. He states: "making tools out of metal, especially iron, was (and still is) a complicated process. It took an extraordinary mind to conceive of its application to technology, even if we grant that its discovery was by chance. A new system of handling the raw materials had to be devised once it was discovered that these could be fashioned into tools more effective than stones. The only was to achieve this was smelting. Here some kind of experimentation had to be carried out in order to achieve a definite technological goal."[3]

However, Mercado suggests that rather than developing their own forging and smelting process, Filipinos perfected the use of the Malay forge during the metal age (c. A.D. 600). He asserts that concrete evidence has not yet surfaced as to whether the Filipino mined their own minerals or had them imported from international traders.[4] Regardless of whether the Filipino "invented" his own forging and smelting process, or how the raw materials were acquired, it is quite evident that the Filipino was adept in crafting a variety tools *(kasangkapan)* and weapons *(sandata).*

There are few places in the world where weapon design and characteristics vary so greatly as in Southeast Asia. The Philippines maintains a plethora of ethnic groups, and so it is no surprise that its martial arts exhibit such a diverse spectrum of weapons. Although varying in regional design and

characteristics, the variety of Filipino *sandata* are classified into five basic types: slash and thrust, impact, flexible, projectile, and protectants.

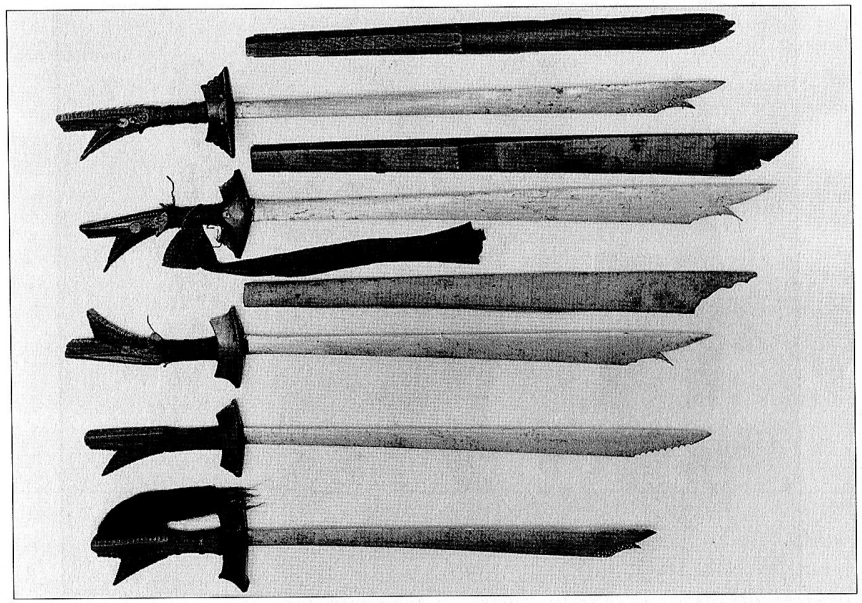
A typology of weapons entails a study, analysis, and classification of armaments based on types as determined by common properties. Weapon types are so classified by property (constitution) and function (primary use). It should be noted, however, that many weapons, such as the spear, can at once function as a thrust weapon, an impact weapon, and a projectile weapon, thereby rightfully belonging to a number of different typologies. Therefore, although a useful method in presenting a general overview, any attempt at classifying weapons by gross typology alone is necessarily limited by the structure of such a classification model. Rather than attempt such an exhaustive study of Filipino *sandata,* and fall short due to space limitations, this section will focus on a classificatory overview of the more common Filipino weapons and protectants by general typology.

Within a given typology (e.g., slash and thrust weapons), one will find a number of subtypes (e.g., *kampilan, barong, kris*). These subtypes, as well, may at once differ in name (based on the language or dialect of its possessor) and ornamentation (based on region and individual taste), while still maintaining its subtype characteristics. The Philippine *kris* sword, for example, while spelled a number of ways (e.g., *keris, kalis, kris*), and exhibiting minor property differentiation (e.g., length and width of the blade and handle motif), possesses a basic serpentine-blade design, a single- as opposed to double-handed manipulation, and a slashing versus thrusting function. Thus, regardless of regional name and ornamentation preference, the *kris* is a subtype of the slash and thrust typology.

With the exception of the *bolo* (general utility knife), the weapons of the Philippines do not stem from a heritage of farming tools. Rather, the Filipino reshaped and refined his hunting implements to obtain a superior construction for tribal head-hunting practices, and improved durability and balance for use in hand-to-hand combat. Unlike the systems of weapons instruction found elsewhere in Asia, a Filipino weapon does not, in itself, require a specific, organized fighting methodology. Each weapon is manipulated in such a manner as to compliment its physical characteristics in general, and the practitioner's martial art and personal style in particular. Such a tendency toward universal applications of weapon techniques is undoubtedly rooted in the fact that common weapons are found throughout most of the Archipelago.

Slash and Thrust Weapons

Historically, the ancient Islamic martial arts of the southern Philippines were taught and structured around the use of slash and thrust weapons.



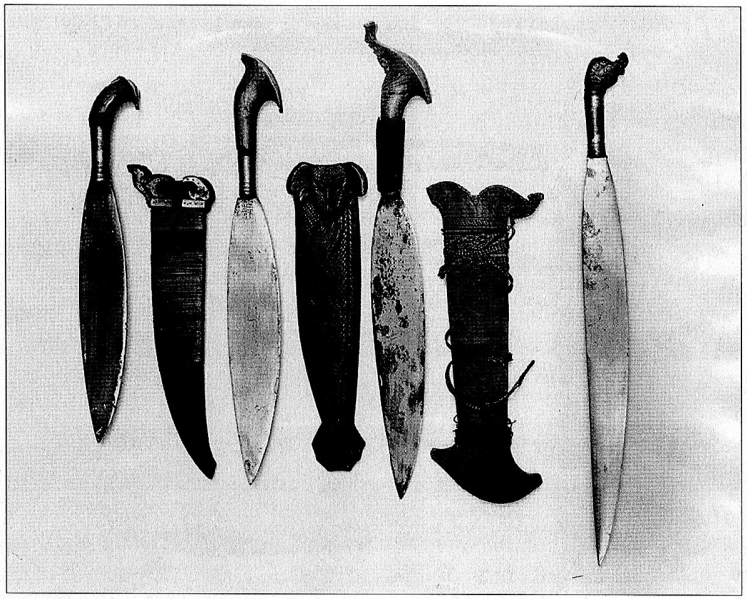
Kampilan swords

Such weapons were generally coated with various poisons prior to engaging in hand-to-hand combat. Moreover, Scott notes that "[t]he fiction that the metal itself had been rendered poisonous by some arcane alchemy no doubt enhanced its market value."[5] Many believe that the *kampilan,* a heavy, dual-pointed sword, and the *barong,* a leaf-shaped sword, were originally weapons of the Sea Dyaks of North Borneo. Both of these swords have been adopted as national weapons of the Moros of Sulu and Mindanao.

The *kampilan* is a sword of approximately forty-four inches in length. It has a carved hilt, a fork-shaped pommel, and a guard which stylizes the cavernous jaws of a crocodile. *Kampilan* are generally decorated with either red- or black-dyed tufts of hair. The blade is long and straight with a single edge which widens to a dual-point.

Kampilan are sheathed in a breakaway scabbard consisting of two pieces of wood shaped to fit the contour of the blade, and fastened at two points by string or vine. This unique scabbard construction affords the warrior the ability to draw his sword and slash his opponent in one motion; at the initiation of a slash the string is severed and the scabbard falls apart.

The Bornean Sea Dyaks believe that *Toh,* a powerful ghost-soul, resides in the head of man. In times past, acquiring an enemy's head in combat through decapitation was a symbolic act of bravery, reconciliation, and

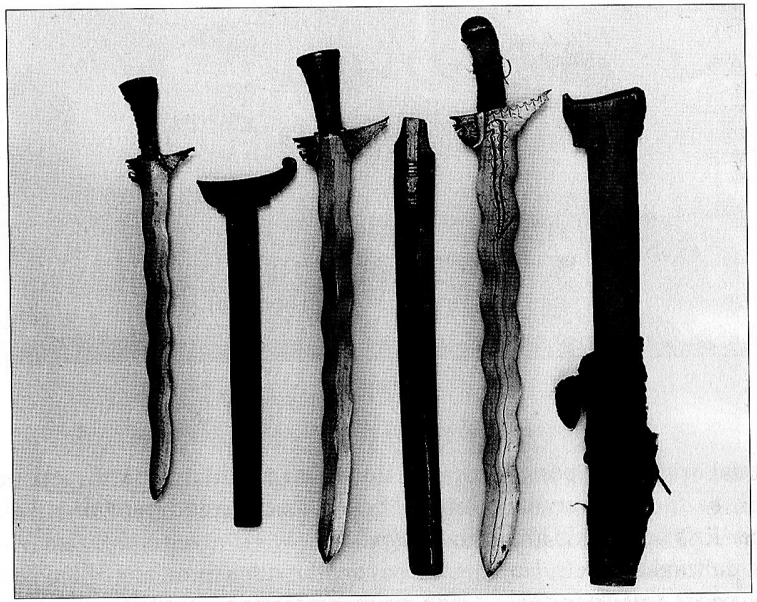


Barong swords

revenge. Once taken, however, Coe et al. notes that the head "was treated with respect, cared for, and even fed."[6] Because of its size and weight, the *kampilan* was a preferred weapon for "head-hunting" in the southern Philippines.

The leaf-shaped *barong* was traditionally an indispensable part of the Moro's attire. They are carried in flat wooden scabbards decorated with elegant carvings, and carried tucked in the front of the *sarong* (waist cloth). *Barong* were often an accompaniment of the Moro while running *juramentado*. Winderbaum notes that *barong* were often etched with the following Arabic slogans: "There is no god but Allah," and "This *barong* has killed a score of enemies and must not be drawn from the scabbard except with intent to kill."[7]

Barong often range from sixteen to eighteen inches in length, are nearly six inches wide at the center, single-edged, guardless, and have simple pommels for fighting and elaborately stylized ones for ceremonial purposes. Whether simple or elaborate, the handle of the *barong* is stylized after the *kakatua* (cockatoo beak) which prevents it from accidentally slipping out of the wielder's bloody hand during combat. The slashing capabilities of *barong* are difficult to match and are said to have the capacity to sever a man's arm with one blow. *Barong* are the favored weapon for close quarter combat among Tausug, Samal, and Yakan warriors.

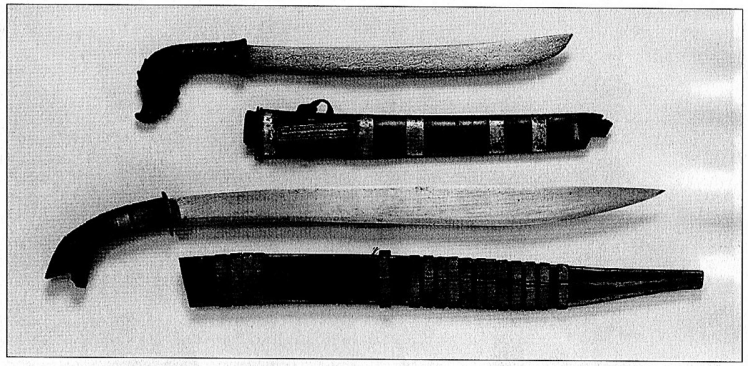


Kris swords

Perhaps the most common sword found throughout Mindanao and Sulu is the *kris*. Although *kris* are to be found in the Visayas, Scott notes that these are inferior to those from Mindanao and Sulu, which, themselves, are thought to be less esteemed than imports from Makassar and Borneo. Like the *barong*, the *kris* is most extensively used by the Tausug, Samal, and Yakan warriors.

The origin of the *kris* is shrouded in an aura of mystery and long a matter of dispute among arms historians. One early theory posits that it derived from the *buntot-pagi*, or tail of the stingray fish. It is also believed to have been crafted in the third century B.C. as a Hindu religious weapon with mystical powers. It is also commonly thought to have a Muslim background, as suggested by similar blades found in the Middle East, Indonesia, and Malaysia today. In addition, some assert that its design originates from the shape of the mythical *naga* (serpent or dragon).

Kris blades are forged from finely tempered steel of different grades, giving it the appearance of the revered Damascus blades. This forging method produces a blade with dark and light wavy lines called *pamor*, meaning "pattern." *Kris* blades are always double-edged and found either completely straight *(sundang)*, completely wavy (*kiwo-kiwo* or *seko*), or in combination with wavy at the bottom and straight at the top *(ranti)*. The shape and number of waves on a *kris* are significant as they distinguish its ethnic or



Bolos

regional origin. The pommels, made from such material as hardwood, bone, antler, or shell, are stylized into a "horse-hoof" design known as *kalaw-kalaw. Kris* scabbards are termed *taguban.*

As cultural artifacts, *barong* and *kris* are the staple products of the Tausug *mananasal* (blacksmiths). Aside from perfection of blade designs the *mananasal* take great effort and pride in the craftsmanship associated the handles and scabbards accompanying such weapons. As an example, Szanton notes: "For the *barong,* the handle is wrapped in chord and metal at the far end, and carved and polished at the upper part. At the end of the grip is a protrusion carved with *ukkil* designs. The *daganan,* or handle of the Tausug *kris,* can also be profusely decorated, sometimes with mother-of-pearl. *Taguban* are beautifully carved and are covered with *budbud* (fine rattan)."[8]

Perhaps the most basic and widely used sword is the long agricultural knife known as the *bolo.* Primarily a working tool, the *bolo* became famous throughout the world during the Spanish-American War when Filipino servicemen formed bolo battalions—troops armed with regulation firearms and *bolos.* The blades are generally rough or unfinished as the weapon was made primarily for agricultural use. There are many types of *bolos* so-named after their most distinguishing characteristic. The *pinute* style derives from the word *puti* which means whitened, after the white ray of light which forms along the edge of the blade when properly sharpened. The *matulis* style was named for its ability to maintain a honed edge for slashing and a sharp thrusting point, while the *malapad* style is named after the sheer width of its blade. The Bonifacio *bolo* style was named after the type brandished by Andres Bonifacio while initiating the Katipunan revolutionary movement against Spain in 1896.

The *balisong* or "butterfly knife" is arguably the most controversial, well-

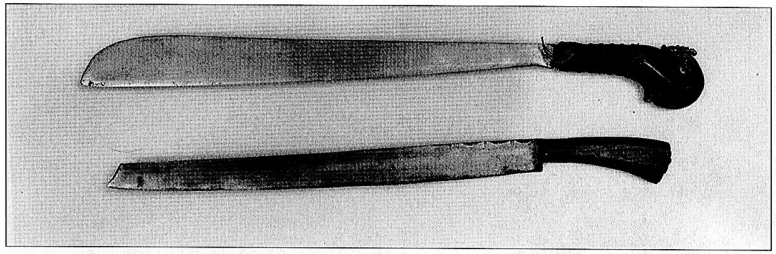
Perfecto de Leon, first *balisong* maker

known, and infamous indigenous weapon of the Philippines. First constructed in 1905 in Batangas, Philippines by Perfecto de Leon, the *balisong* gained mass exposure after World War II when the Batangueño blade smiths earned a living providing custom crafted knives to American servicemen stationed in the Philippines at Clark Air Force Base and Subic Naval Base.

The basic material from which *balisong* blades are forged is the discarded suspension springs from abandoned U.S. Army jeeps. Such springs, when heated on hot coals, are separated by the blade smiths who proceed to hammer and temper the steel into appropriate shapes and strengths. Holes are then drilled into the bottom of the blade into which the two-section steel sheath/handle is attached. The sheath/handle is often covered or decorated with mother of pearl, carabao horn, wood, or ivory.

Another Filipino dagger is the *balaraw,* a pre-Hispanic thrusting weapon Mariñas believes to have originally been about three inches wide, eleven inches long, with a hilt length of five to six inches.[9] However, Scott notes that by the sixteenth century the *balaraw* was forged into a short, broad dagger with a single-edged, leaf-shaped blade of about three inches in length.[10] In general, however, the *balaraw* was fitted with a cross-shaped hilt which at times was used as a protection against wrist cuts, and at other times was grasped in such a way as to alter the balance and leverage when used for thrusting or slashing. Like *kampilan, balaraw* were also found to be decorated with red-dyed tassels made of either silk or human hair.

Other Malay slash and thrust weapons adopted by the Moros for combat include the *golok,* used by the Bagobo tribe of Mindanao for jungle warfare, and the *klewang,* a saber with a straight, single-edged blade which widens at its point. For the Christian Filipinos of Cebu, the *talibong* is the common sword. *Talibong* blades are heavier than most Filipino swords, have a straight back, a curved cutting edge, and an elongated point for



Klewang swords

Panabas choppers

deeper penetration. The handle, as well, curves toward the edge, continuing the concave design of the sword.

While the aforementioned weapons have slash and thrust capabilities there are also a few weapons used solely for chopping. The *panabas,* for example, is a weapon with a wide metal chopping-head which appears to be a cross between the blade of a sword and the head of an ax. A jungle knife primarily used for executions, *panabas* are popular in the Malabang, Cotabato, and Labuan districts of Mindanao. The blade of the *panabas* is widest near the point and bends backward toward the hilt. This chopper became a popular weapon in jungle warfare during World War II, and is perhaps a permutation of the Bornean jungle knife, *parang latok.* Among the Igorot tribes of Northern Luzon the headax is a favorite weapon. Stone describes the headax as having "a broad head with the edge projecting in a point at the point furthest from the handle, This is balanced by a much longer and thinner point at the opposite side."[11] Jenks further notes that Igorot headaxes are made in Balbelasan, in old Abra Province.[12]

Impact Weapons

Impact weapons surfaced as primary weapons as a reaction to the imposition of martial law in the Philippines during the Spanish regime. In martial practice and folk performance the movements of blunt sticks of various lengths were symbolic of sword movements. Over time, however, many of the central and northern Philippine martial arts naturally evolved around the use of sticks which created new techniques of striking, blocking, and disarming that cannot be done with an edged weapon (without cutting one's self).

While commonly known as "eskrima sticks," impact weapons, like slash and thrust weapons, hold a number of shapes and designs, uses and names. For example, the *baston* is a straight piece of sugar cane about twenty-four inches long, while the *yantok* is a tapered, thirty-two inch length of rattan. Both impact weapons are used in much the same way, while some prefer the use of the *yantok* for its concentrated snapping action at the end of each blow. The *garote,* or flat stick, is used in such a way as to mimic the movements of the sword. It may be a mere flattened piece of hardwood or shaped to a specific sword-design. In general, these terms are often used interchangeably. In addition, they are often used synonymously to refer to the "eskrima stick."

Longer impact weapons include the *bangkaw,* a straight staff of rattan running approximately forty-four inches. Specifically, however, the staff is measured by the distance from the ground to the individual practitioner's sternum. The *bangkaw* is generally held by both hands at one end, and wielded in much the same manner as the *kampilan.* Another two-handed impact weapon is the *pingga,* a traditional load-carrying pole of the *magpuputo* (rice cake venders), *magtataho* (bean curd venders), and the *maglalako ng kulambo't kumot* (mosquito net and blanket venders).[13] *Pingga* are three to four foot lengths of flattened bamboo used for transporting various goods and for fighting; its techniques, too, are based on those of the *kampilan.*

Perhaps the smallest impact weapon is the six inch hand-load, known by such names as *olisi-palad* (palm stick) and *tabak-maliit* (small stick). These small impact weapons are used primarily for striking an opponent's nerve-centers and pressure-points. They are also used as supplements in effecting various disarming and joint-locking techniques. Hand-loads, as well as other impact weapons, are generally constructed of rattan, although bamboo is also used. These materials are light-weight, inexpensive, and ideal for training. For purposes of fighting, however, woods that are harder and more dense, such as *bahi* and *kamagong,* are preferred for obvious reasons.

Flexible Weapons

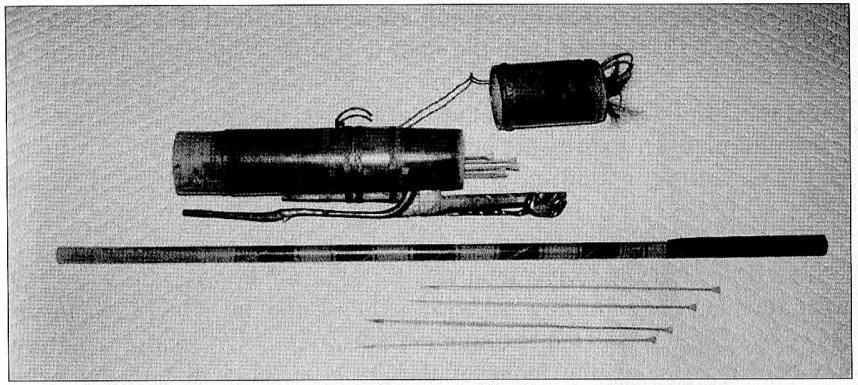
Having the added advantage of being able to maneuver around an opponent's defensive blocks or protective shields, flexible weapons fall into two general categories: those used for choking and binding an opponent, and those used to whip or strike an opponent from a distance. The weapons found in each category are used in identical ways; their names vary based on the material of which they are constructed. Furthermore, while these are general classifications of flexible weapons it should be noted that weapons in one type may be used in a manner similar to the other.

Flexible weapons of the choking and binding type include the *kadena* (chain), *lubid* (rope), and *panyo* (handkerchief). These are primarily defensive weapons which are used to choke an opponent or bind and immobilize his limbs. Conversely, weapons such as the *latigo* (horse-whip) and the *buntot-pagi* (stingray tail) are primarily offensive flexible weapons, used to strike an opponent from long range. Flexible weapons are maneuvered in much the same manner as the single stick, as the long handle of the whip and the density of the stingray tail are similar to it. What they are able to do that a stick can not, is to bend around an opponent's defensive maneuver and strike him, even if blocked.

Projectile Weapons

There is no doubt that projectile weapons played an important role in warfare among the various tribal and ethnic groups residing in the Philippines. Such weapons made it possible to attack an enemy from a distance greater than that of hand-held weapons. This made it possible to kill a number of approaching enemies prior to engaging in hand-to-hand combat, thus increasing the chances of survival by decreasing the number of approaching enemy warriors.

Projectile weapons find themselves in two classifications: those thrown by hand, and those projected with the help of a mechanism. From a fairly close range six inch pieces of bamboo, known as *bagakay,* could be thrown at an enemy. *Bagakay* darts are generally thrown five at a time so as to ensure a hit as the wind may blow one or two off-course, or an enemy may evade one. *Bagakay* also find themselves in the form of thin and light bamboo lances, also thrown at close range–one at a time. An effective weapon utilized in the seventeenth century, *bagakay* lances could puncture thick objects. Such an account was noted by Casiño: "The Spaniards feared these weapons, for in spite of their light and harmless appearance the Spanish had seen one lance pierce the side of a boat and kill a rower."[14]



Sumpit blow-gun

At a longer distance, however, the ancient warriors used *sugob,* or sharpened bamboo lances. These lances were fine-crafted and only thrown when it was possible to retrieve them for further use. To affect its retrieval a length chord was attached to the end of the *sugob* and pulled after it hit or missed its desired target. These bamboo lances were sharpened and subjected to fire hardening *(sinugba sa apoy).* After this process was completed they were filled with sand to create a dynamic balance while in motion and an added weight for better target penetration.

Sibat is a general term ascribed to hand-held and throwing spears of all types. Since it was used in war, hunting, ceremony, and ritual, the Filipino spear is found with many names as defined by its length, design, and shape of the attached spear-head. Stone notes that among the Igorot tribes of Northern Luzon, the *fal-feg* is the spear of choice in times of war.[15] The metal spear point is fashioned with a broad head with two blunt barbs protruding from its bottom ends.

Perhaps the most prestigious spear-head design among the Visayans is the *songil,* a leaf-shaped blade of about four inches long and three inches wide. Other spear-heads include the *binalo,* a *songil* of lesser quality; the *budjak,* long and wide but noticeably thin; the *tinikol,* so named after its resemblance to the *tikol* leaf; the *pinuso,* resembling the flower of a banana plant; the *binusloran,* the thickest and heaviest; and the *lanab,* the longest and widest Filipino spear-head. Again, while the name ascribed to the individual spear is based on spear-head design, length, and ornamentation, the general term embracing them is *sibat.*

From a medium distance *kalway* (darts) are projected from the *sumpit* (blow gun). *Sumpit* are generally found in Sarangani and Palawan and are simple yet sophisticated weapons. The shaft of the blowgun is a hallowed piece of cane, thirty-five inches being an average length. *Kalway* are long,

slender darts crafted from wood and are about thirteen inches in length. The point is either carved from the shaft or from fish bone and fastened to the dart shaft. The butt of *kalway* are fitted with a piece of soft, cork-like wood to make the *sumpit* airtight so that the dart may be blown out of it in a forceful manner. *Kalway* are kept in a wooden quiver known as *sisidlan* which is worn on a cloth or string about the waist. As an added bonus, when all *kalway* have been spent the *sumpit* may then be fitted with a spearhead and used as a spear.

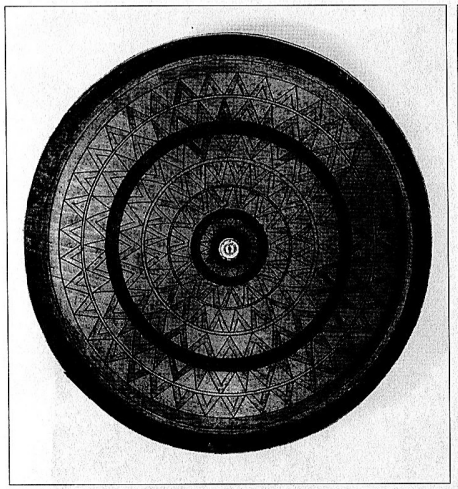
To strike an enemy from a relatively far distance the bow and arrow was used. By themselves, the bow is known as *busog* and the quiver as *talangan*. However, when considered as a single functioning unit, the bow and arrow are known as *pana,* the name of the arrow itself. Although the Aetas (Negritos) are well adept in the use of the *pana* the Visayans are said to be amateurs. In fact, while the Aeta arrow shaft was fashioned with feathers for accuracy in flight the Visayan type was not, thus being unpredictable in flight and largely inaccurate. However, when a number of bowmen fired their arrows among an enemy at once they proved to be most functional.

Other projectile weapons include small, make-shift pistols, the *lantaka,* and the *yo-yo*. The *lantaka* is a brass cannon of Malay origin which ranges in length from twenty inches to seven feet. True to the Filipinos' syncretic nature, *lantakas* are often found to be decorated with patterns of Chinese or Spanish influence.[16] Of special interest here is the *yo-yo* which, in the West, is considered a child's toy; in the Philippines, however, it is a deadly weapon. Jones notes that the primitive *yo-yo* was a stone attached to a vine, whose initial function was most likely hunting.[17] In 1888, Dr. Jose Rizal visited the United States and demonstrated the use of the *yo-yo* as not only a pacifying toy but a deadly projectile weapon. The *yo-yo* is held in the hand by its string tied around a finger. It is then thrown at an enemy in an effort to either distract him or knock him out. Like the spear, the *yo-yo* may be retrieved after launching, making it ready for further use.

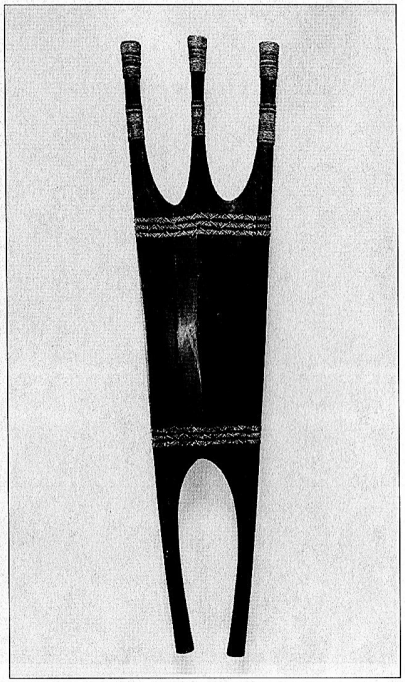
In general, the business-end of most projectile weapons was covered in poison. Scott has noted that projectile weapons "were ordinarily poisoned with *bulit,* snake venom, preferably from a viper so deadly it was called *odto,* meaning 'high noon,' because its victims could not expect to survive more than half a day."[18]

Protectants

In defense of an enemy's weapon the Filipino warrior made use of various protective shields, and to a lesser extent body armor. In general, the rectangular shields of the northern tribes are characterized by five elongated points, two projecting down from the bottom and three projecting up from



Taming shield of southern Philippines

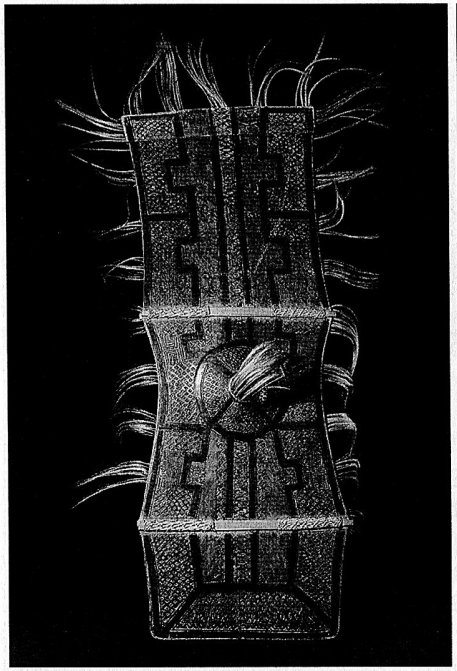


Kalasag shield of the Kalinga

the top. Shields in the north are elaborate while those of the south become less so, with two or less projections—they are often round or oval with no projections. Making note of the shields used by the Filipinos during the Spanish occupation in the seventeenth century, Casiño notes: "The fighting men carried shields called *taming*, which were large and circular; they were common in Sulu, Basilan, and among the coast dwellers in Western Mindanao. The highlanders used elongated ones called *kalasag.*"[19]

Taming are generally made of rattan woven in a thick *sawali* (finely woven rattan) fashion and are generally round, but are also found shaped like fish. Fernando-Amilbangsa notes that "the fish-shaped *taming* is used in *magsankil,* a Badjaw fight dance, [while] the round-shaped *taming* is used in *sayaw,* a Samal fight dance."[20] The origin of the *taming* is uncertain although Goquingco postulates that it may have come from the *tagbanwa* shield of the Muslim Maranao, and is possibly of Chinese origin.[21] In contrast, Scott suggests that *taming* may have been copied from the Moluccans or the Spaniards.[22]

Kalasag are made of fibrous wood reinforced with *sawali* and are generally able to fend off most swords. Its primary function, however, was in keeping spears and arrows from penetrating its bearer. Since the shield's material was fibrous it was able to enmesh the enemies spear, thus pre-



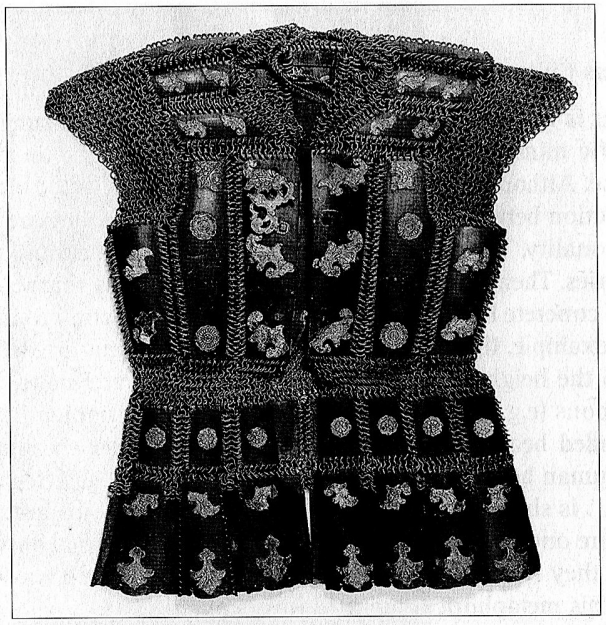
Kalasag shield of the Bagobo

A child's *Kalasag* shield

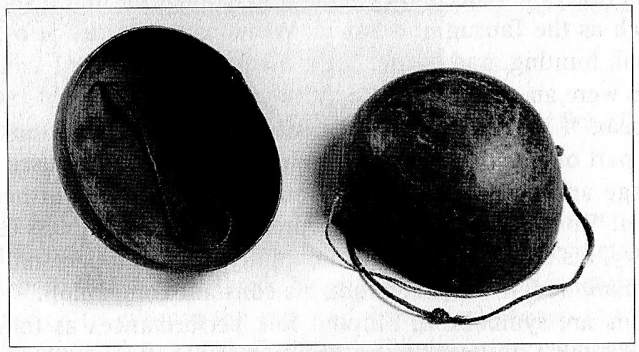
venting him from retrieving it. The general design of *kalasag* includes its body-length height to allow full protection, with either slight tapering toward one end, or half-circles cut in both sides to allow the warrior to effectively maneuver his weapon. Scott further notes that in the Visayas "the *kalasag* was typically painted red and decorated with shell sequins and hog bristles on top or, in the case of real braves, the hair of vanquished foes."[23]

The importance of "the center," which Eliade envisioned as symbolizing the threshold between human and spiritual realms (discussed in chapter five), is also prevalent in the design and motif of Filipino shields. To this end, Capistrano-Baker notes: "In northern Luzon cultures, the two triangles of the mortar-shaped spirit shield similarly converge at the center, manifested in the central boss in the three-pronged wooden version. It is, thus, at the center where human and spiritual realms intersect—where divine powers magnify temporal strength."[24]

Whereas the native Filipino warriors did not have the luxury of European chain-mail armor, they did have a quilted equivalent called *barote.* Made of abaca chord woven tightly into braids, *barote* body armor was



Pakil Moro body armor



Kupya helmets of Luzon

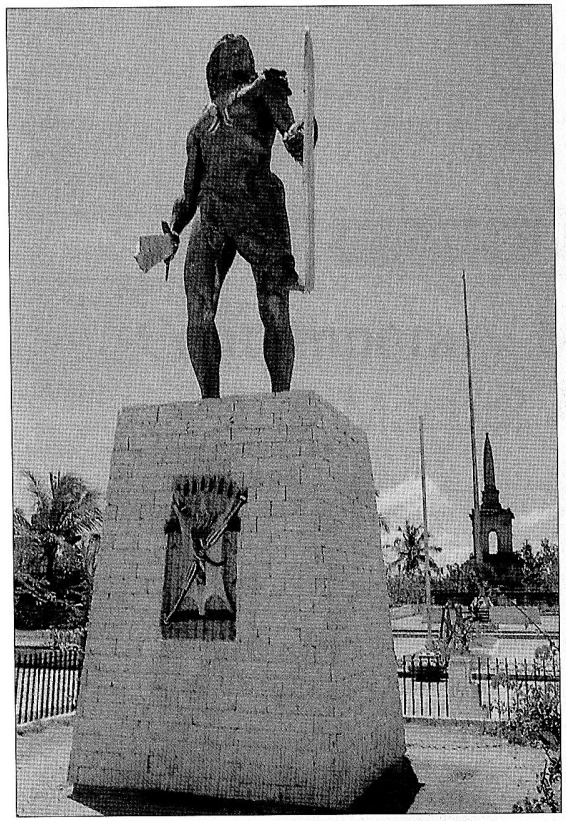
similar to modern-day ripstop nylon in that, when punctured, it will not tear due to its intricately woven pattern. The more solid body armor, and one possibly fashioned after the Spanish design, is *pakil.* Scott notes that in the Visayas, *pakil* armor was made of bark, bamboo, or *kamagong,* while in Mindanao it was made of carabao horn or elephant hide. In addition to protective shields and breast-plat armor, the Bontoc Igorot warriors of Luzon occasionally wore wooden helmets known as *kupya,* although these do not appear to have been in wide use.

Weapons as Cultural Artifacts

An artifact is any material object which comes from the subjective, culture-specific mind of its creator and is materialized into an object for a specific use. Although not necessarily forged by the warrior himself, there is a connection between the warrior and his weapons—they are extensions of his personality. The *mandirigma* finds comfort and security in the weapons he carries. Their type and characteristic identify his character, his soul. On a more concrete level, weapons have a close connection to the warrior's body. For example, the length of *kampilan* and *bangkaw* are determined in relation to the height of the person for whom they are made. The size of other weapons (e.g., sticks and shields), are also determined in relation to their intended bearer. Tavarelli suggests that the "association of shields with the human body, which they are made to protect, is inseparable. This reaction . . . is shaped by the sense that the object, and its aura of human presence, are one. The size and shape are read not as formal abstract qualities but as they relate to human scale. . . . [W]hen a shield was wielded by a warrior this metaphorical identity was explicit."[25]

In ancient Filipino society weapons were symbols for identifying one's status and function. Indeed, they remain so among certain Muslim Filipino tribes such as the Tausug and Samal. Weapons are made for ornamentation, ritual, hunting, and battle. Scott notes that in the sixteenth century "weapons were an ordinary part of Visayan male costume, at least a dagger or spear. If bound with gold or set with gems, these constituted an essential part of a *datu's* personal jewelry."[26] Weapons were used as dowry in marriage and as currency for the purchase of slaves. Furthermore, as Cato notes: "To the Moro, his sword represented his willingness to fight for his country, his status within his community, and on a personal level, his sense of manhood. It was, therefore, his constant companion."[27]

Weapons are symbolic in Filipino folk performances as they are not used in full force. Cultures have different ways of controlling violence. Since weapons are cultural artifacts they constrict and control violence and, therefore, have an important relationship to warfare. There is a strong connection between culture and its artifacts. There are codes and rules that these artifacts must subscribe to. Depending on the context and place of usage they are used as artifacts in training, demonstration, entertainment, ritual, and in another case they can cause deadly damage. They are examples of material culture and how objects take on different meanings relative to circumstance. The weapon in these cases escapes the exclusive association with warfare and enters quite different cultural realms. It has become a cultural artifact in senses beyond the scope of this mere introduction. In the words of Tavarelli: "Created by artists, craftsmen, and warriors in the context of the political, social, spiritual and aesthetic forces of the cultures in which they lived, [weapons] offer us an irregular keyhole through which to glimpse the rich and varied indigenous societies from which they came."[28] As cultural artifacts, Filipino arms and armor are examples of a predominant material martial culture embedded in Filipino society.



Lapulapu, first Filipino hero

Perhaps one image above all embraces the essence of the Filipino warrior: the statue of Rajah Lapulapu poised and armed with sword and shield. This image of the Philippines' first national hero symbolizes the ethos of the *mandirigma*—the state of being in perpetual readiness for battle. More than a mere symbol for identifying a warrior, Filipino *sandata* are metaphors for life—they constitute the warrior. They are more than just material objects, they are cultural artifacts which at once embody and embrace the ethos and worldview of the Filipino warrior.

PART FOUR

Contemporary Masters and Martial Arts

The artist transcends within himself, and
in that lonely region of stress and strife,
if he is deserving and fortunate,
he finds the term of his appeal.
—JOSEPH CONRAD

Introduction

The world abounds with martial arts "masters." A relatively large number of these individuals have only a theoretical understanding of the techniques that comprise their arts. Moreover, many have not had the opportunity to employ their skills in an actual fight. As a result, the training methods of some martial arts have become largely antiquated and over-stylized. Since the Philippines is an archipelago which is in constant turmoil, its martial arts practitioners are able to maintain a practical experience in the arts—many having employed their skills in the defense of their country during World War II, the Filipino-American War, and against other practitioners of the arts in *patayan* "death-matches."

It has only been in the past twenty years that the practitioners of Filipino martial arts have come together to form organizations to govern the propagation of their martial traditions. Following the example of martial arts organizations in China, Japan, and Korea, the Philippine organizations have attempted to standardize their ranking structure and titles within the various systems as a means of "legitimizing" their arts and establishing them in tandem with the rest of the martial arts world.

Although various Filipino martial arts organizations have since awarded

a relatively large number of practitioners "master" titles, many of these individuals were not included in this study. This is because some organizations have awarded titles for reasons other than proven skill level: the practitioner has reached the age of sixty and has spent at least forty years in the art; the practitioner has promoted at least one student to the master's rank; the practitioner arbitrarily ascribes his name to an existing system and proclaims a false inheritance from a dead relative or master and is duly recognized as the head of a system; or the practitioner is an important political or entertainment figure and will, in return for recognition, support and promote the organization.

For the purpose of this study, however, it was necessary that the selected individuals be of the upper echelon of Filipino martial arts practitioners. The eighteen masters included herein were not selected on the basis of popularity and purported skill level alone. Criterion for selection included the individual's age, experience, reputation, critical acceptance by peers, established lineage, verifiable history, demonstrable skill level, and general availability for a face-to-face interview and photograph session. The distinguishing factor that sets these individuals apart from the mainstream is that they are not mere masters *in* a general martial art style, but masters *of* a specific martial art system. A concerted effort was made to contact as many "heads-of-martial-systems" as possible. This made it possible for the book to highlight eighteen masters representing an equal number of different Filipino martial arts.

Contact was made with the masters included in this text in one or more of the following ways: initial informal contact was made by way of verbal and/or written communication; participation in private training sessions, group classes, and/or seminars was arranged; travel to the masters' homes or schools to conduct interviews. Due to limited time and financial support I was, unfortunately, unable to meet and interview all of the deserving individuals. To remedy this, I have mentioned the names of other established masters elsewhere in the text and placed photographs of them accordingly when available. For the reader interested in information on the masters not presented herein, I direct you to Dan Inosanto's *The Filipino Martial Arts,* and Edgar Sulite's *The Masters of Arnis, Kali and Eskrima.*

The following section provides historical sketches of eighteen contemporary masters of Filipino martial arts. The diversity of backgrounds, training, life experience, and achievement of these individuals is necessarily reflected in the martial techniques and concepts that shape their fighting arts. Through the following narrative and interview accounts of these masters' lives and training, we are able to gain emic insight into the evolution of the Filipino martial arts—that is, from the perspective of the participants. Accompanying these narratives and interviews are a number of individual

photographs depicting the martial techniques found within their respective systems. Sequential photographs depicting their martial techniques are placed side-by-side in chap. 27 for ease in comparing their movements.

As to the question of which master and system is the "best," it is anyone's guess. Having practiced and observed a great many martial arts, I unequivocally assert that no single system is best. While I do believe that certain systems are more combat efficient than others, when it comes to applying their techniques, it is largely the individual who makes them work. However, I did pose this question to each of the informants I spoke with. And while each master thought their style was the best, they respected and revered certain individuals more so than others. The general consensus is that Antonio Ilustrisimo, at the age of eighty-nine, is a force to be reckoned with, and is still feared by many masters; the late Islao Romo was said to be unbelievable, and eye-witness accounts attest to his defeating Felicissimo Dizon, among other revered masters, in challenge matches; and the late Teodoro Saavedra was well respected and also said to be unbeatable. To everyone's disappointment, these men never met socially or in combat.

To this end, this section is a dedication and acknowledgment to the contemporary Filipino masters who have achieved the most revered status of being the head of their respective martial arts "family." In an effort to pay no disrespect to any of the masters by the arbitrary placing of their chapters, I have ordered them alphabetically by the practitioner's last name. In this way it is hoped that any confusion over why one master's chapter appears before that of another will be eliminated. While the reputations of these men certainly precede them, it is hoped that these brief life-histories will shed light into the inner workings of these men and their fighting arts.

9

Herminio Biñas

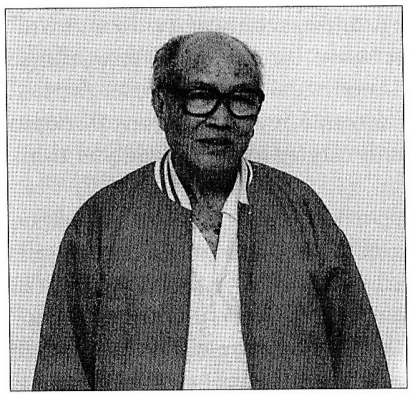
Biñas Dynamic Arnis

Strong leaders
are men of tempered character
with unwavering constancy of purpose.
—H. B. BIÑAS, SR.

Introduction

During an intimate discussion with Professor Herminio Biñas one cannot help but to feel his genuine love for all. According to his philosophy, the Filipino art of arnis is a vehicle for personal development. This growth is exemplified in the metamorphosis that has occurred in Biñas over the past seventy-odd years of his experience. In his teens he liked to compete in challenge matches with other renowned *arnisadors*. During his early adulthood he was responsible for the capture of war criminals as a member of the Philippine Constabulary. He also instructed the Philippine's military in his method of boloplay. In his senior years, however, Biñas has abandoned the concept of arnis as an offensive fighting art and looks to it as a sole means of self-preservation on many levels.

Herminio Biñas is best described as idealistic. As such, some individuals of lesser personal development have mocked his enthusiasm and life's philosophy. Biñas, now eighty-four, has a wisdom that only seventy-plus years of practical martial experience could produce. He has been witness to an abundance of violence and death—he has also felt a great deal of love and respect. Within Biñas' extended family one finds doctors, nurses, and accountants. Although having never completed high school, Biñas is a recognized professor of arnis—an art and science in which he excels. In fact,



Professor Herminio B. Biñas, Sr.

in 1986, he was certified as the "grandmaster consultant" by the Negros Occidental Arnis Federation and the National Arnis Association of the Philippines.

The Man and His Art

Herminio B. Biñas, Sr. was born in Iloilo, Philippines, in 1913. As a young boy he practiced Japanese karate. After three years of dedicated training, he felt incapable of defending himself against the weapon wielding *arnisadors* so common in his *barrio* (small town). This realization was actualized after a number of fights that ended in his defeat. The last of which found Biñas laying face down on a dirt road with a group of boys beating him unforgivingly. Frustrated, and disillusioned with "traditional" martial arts instruction and the apparent rigidity of the Japanese style, Biñas, age thirteen, picked up a stick-and-dagger for the first time. He began to improvise.

"I had no instructor in arnis," claims Biñas. "When I would fight by the river my *primo* (cousin) would observe. If I were to lose he would take mental notes as to why and later attack me in the same way until I discovered a counter technique." It should be noted that a number of prominent masters, also active during Biñas' time, also claim to be self-taught. Arnis is something that many Filipino boys did as a past time, much the same way Americans play basketball. It is possible to learn the physical skills without a teacher or coach. Over time, Biñas, his cousin Jose Viñas, and their five companions developed a solid reputation as formidable fighters. Word spread and challenges came from other renowned *arnisadors*. In fact, they were so confident in their abilities that they would travel to various provinces to challenge and "test" the local kingpin. "We hear a lot of talk

from people that they are afraid of the kingpin taking over their town." Biñas and company would travel to these towns but in vain. "We would go to fight a kind of competition—one at a time," recalls Biñas. "After the first or second fight the kingpin would back down. They used to say, 'Kingpin and kingpin should never fight because the styles are too deadly.' I think they were just impressed with my system."

Over the next ten years Biñas continued to develop and perfect his method of arnis. Like many Filipinos, Biñas was never at a loss when naming his art which has been known by such names as "supreme dynamic combat of the Philippines," "Biñas Filipino perfected style," "Biñas supreme dynamics," and finally, "Biñas dynamic arnis." With the advancement of his system and a wealth of practical experience supporting it, Biñas became notorious throughout Luzon and the Visayas. In 1941, he was called on by the Philippine government to act as an instructor to the infamous bolo battalions. He served under Lieutenant Dionisio Orille of the Silay-Saravia Hawaiian Philippine Company. Biñas was then certified under a Captain Quinn. Prior to this he served briefly as an airplane observer.

During World War II Biñas was introduced to military intelligence. On August 1, 1941, he was introduced to the military intelligence operative service as a sergeant (S-2) in the 6th Military District in Barotoc Nuevo, Iloilo. On September 17th, the Japanese bombed Barotoc Nueva by air. Biñas was wounded. He was immediately rushed to a mobile aid station just outside of the Barotoc Nuevo city limits. It was here that Captain Dr. Juan T. Bretana, the sector surgeon of the Guerrillas in Panay, removed embedded shrapnel from his face and leg.

As war would have it, a number of top officials committed covert crimes against the Philippine government while others overtly rebelled against its policies. Some of these criminals sought refuge in the mountains of Panay and Luzon. It was in 1942 that the Philippine Constabulary called a single man to travel into these mountainous regions, alone and unarmed, to effect the capture of these offenders. That man was Herminio Biñas. "It was a matter of internal affairs," he recalls. "Because they heard of my reputation and witnessed my instruction to the armed forces, the Constabulary felt that I was their only hope." Although not a full fledged Constabulary member, Biñas agreed to help and was sent undercover into the mountains. A heightened sense of awareness and secrecy were the necessary ingredients which allowed him to befriend and eventually subdue these criminals. In fact, the Constabulary would not support him nor issue help if something were to take a turn for the worse.

Since Biñas was unarmed, he would find himself having to disarm his opponent, followed by joint locking and control maneuvers to restrain him until the proper authorities arrived. Because of his acts of heroism and

bravery Biñas became fully employed in the counter intelligence of the Philippine Constabulary toward the end of World War II. In addition to participating in internal affairs investigations he was once again given orders to instruct the four major armed services at the military camp in Quezon City, Philippines. These orders came from Colonel Alfredo Quiazon AFP (GSC).

Tired of violence and military politics, Biñas retired from military intelligence and took work as a foreman in various factories and shipping yards. This work was not new to him for as a young man of only fourteen years he was placed in charge of time-keeping and payroll for an administration sugar plantation. He continued to develop his so-called dynamic arnis system and came to be employed as the self-defense instructor of the wealthy factory owners. To his credit Biñas has taught, at various times, such prominent masters as his cousin, the late Jose Viñas (founder of the Lapulapu Arnis Affecianados), Jerson Tortal (President of the Negros Occidental Arnis Federation), Amador Chavez (founder of the Chavez Arnis Group), Remy Presas (the "father" of modern arnis in the United States), as well as the late *karateka,* Bruce Tegner (an early writer of books on self-defense).

Herminio Biñas has certainly developed an effective system of self-defense. After years of formulating and testing his methods Biñas dynamic arnis is sometimes referred to as the "Filipino perfected style," (although Biñas himself no longer uses this term). Biñas is a peaceful man who, accompanied by his family, relocated to the United States in 1975. Once again he took work as a foreman, welder, and fabricator of heavy lifting magnets. He was employed by the U.S. Steel Mills, Bethlehem Steel Mills, Alan Wood Steel, Phoenix Steel, and Lukens Steel Mills. Biñas also worked at the Electrical Apparatus Repair Company in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (United States), where he now resides in retirement. When asked why he spent so many years working for such companies rather than commercialize on his art form as have so many others, his reply was simple: "I did not want to lessen my art."

Overview of Biñas Dynamic Arnis

Biñas dynamic arnis is reminiscent of the classical *espada y daga* styles of Negros Occidental, central Philippines. The primary areas of study in dynamic arnis are the *espada* (sword), *solo y doble baston* (single and double sticks), *espada y daga* (sword and dagger), *baston y daga* (stick and dagger), *solo daga* (single dagger), *mano-mano* (empty hands), and the bayonet.

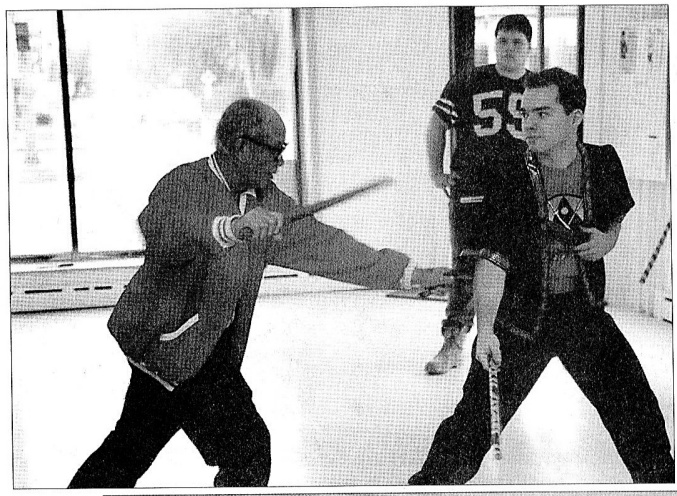
Heavy cutting and whirling strokes are characteristics of Biñas' *espada y daga* techniques. Movements of footwork encompass the side-step, pendulum step, weaving, and pivotal movements. The weapon techniques are

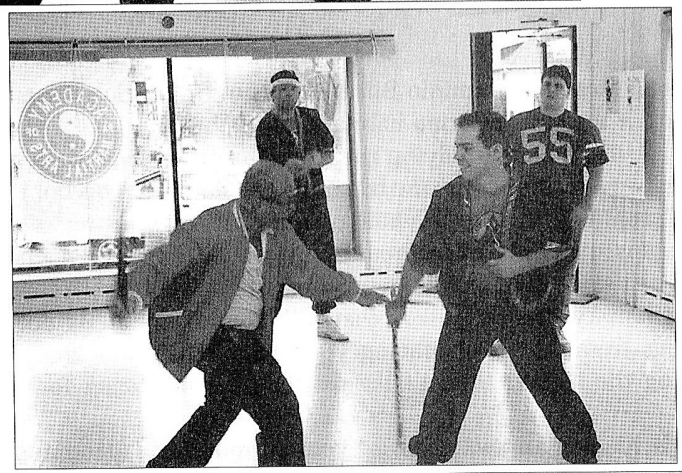
taught in four geometric patterns: the multiplication sign (x), the addition sign (+), the circle (o), and the infinity sign (∞) (also called "figure eight"). Defensive maneuvers encompass techniques of passing and parrying, direct cutting, umbrella block, and crossing block. The training of these skills consists of one person initiating a continuous attack while the other employs the appropriate methods of footwork, defense, and counter stroking maneuvers. The empty hands are trained in the principal skills of disarming, of the stick, sword, dagger, and bayonet. After effectively disarming an opponent, intricate lock and control techniques are employed to subdue an opponent. When pitted against another empty handed opponent, techniques aimed at immobilizing the head are used as a means of immediately controlling the body.

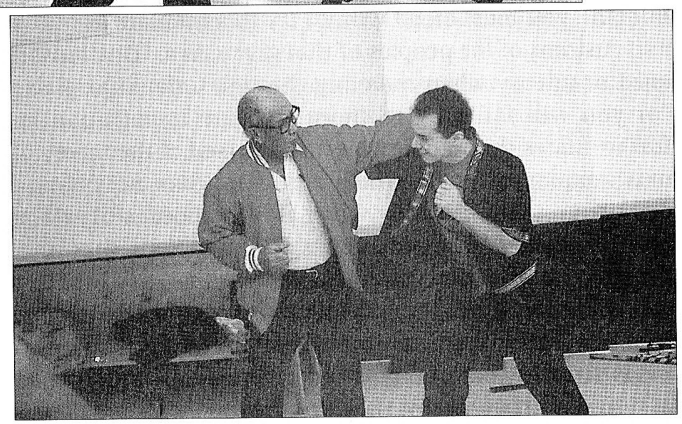
As a result of numerous empty-hand confrontations against weapon-wielding opponents, it is no surprise that disarming techniques have become the hallmark of Biñas dynamic arnis. Through constant study, analysis, and practical experience of possible attacking methods, Biñas has perfected three principal methods of instantly disarming an opponent. He terms these methods lightning disarming, blast disarming, and self-rebounding disarming. The lightning disarm refers to the speed with which is required to effectively insert your weapon or arm around that of an opponent to effect the disarm; the blast disarm refers to the quick, jerking motion of the *arnisador's* arms moving in opposite directions which "blasts" the weapon out of an opponent's grip; the self-rebounding disarm refers to the use of an opponent's body to disarm his own weapon, and injure him in the process.

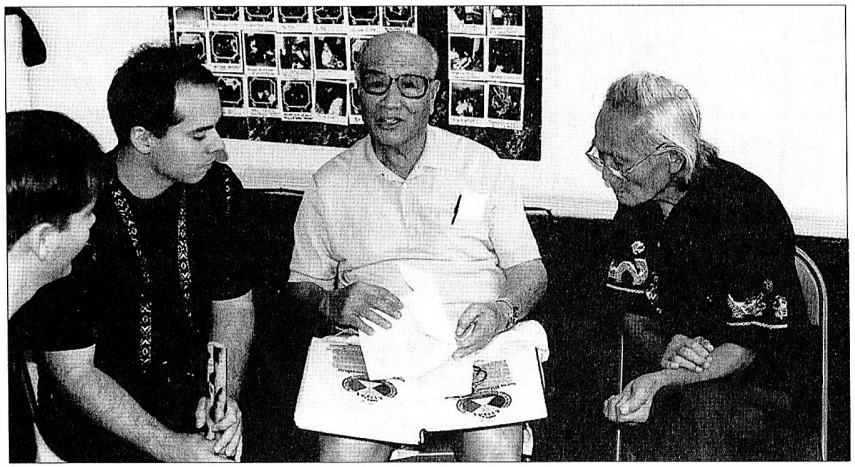
The Humanitarian Habitat Philosophy

Over the years Biñas has developed many programs for not only law enforcement agencies and the military, but also for women, children, and the elderly. He has developed a conceptual philosophy which he fondly terms the "humanitarian habitat." This concept, based on his study and first hand experiences with the way people act when placed in compromising circumstances, is the moral code which underlies Biñas dynamic arnis. The martial arts were, relatively speaking, developed and established as a means of power control through fear and force. This, coupled with the unfortunate effect of Hollywood, has led this discipline to a constellation of inflated egos. It is truly unfortunate that few masters look beyond mere physicality. The Filipino martial arts are a discipline and as such a true master should bring together the physical techniques of self-defense, mental attributes of perceptual awareness and education, spiritual growth through love, harmony, and a respect for all, and a strong sense of legal responsibility. These









Biñas discussing philosophy with Prof. Vee right and the author

are the qualities that Herminio Biñas instills in his disciple. These are the principles of the humanitarian habitat philosophy.

Biñas claims that by studying the reactions of animals when placed in compromising positions (e.g. the reactions of a dog when his tail is stepped on), and applying this to psychology, one can learn a great deal about relationships and preferred methods of interaction. He further believes that the way you walk, talk, and address others is a prime factor in the respondents' negativity, or lack thereof, that will loom over you. By not evoking ill feelings from others, or placing yourself in dangerous areas, you are employing the highest level of the martial arts: not being forced into a fight.

After achieving an awareness of your surroundings (geographical and human), you must blend with or try to assimilate as best you can the ways and customs of the peoples of that given area. "One must never look frightened or uneasy when traveling through unfamiliar places," asserts Biñas, "or you will fall pray to those who are intent upon harming you." He further states that should you find yourself at the mercy of an attacker you must employ no force which is greater than necessary, but sufficient to deter aggression, but only when all other means of self-preservation have been exhausted. Professor Biñas further asserts that one must be able to perceive and interpret essential elements that may lead to a possible violent confrontation. Perceptual awareness gives one that opportunity to assess a situation and withdrawal from it before the onset of a physical altercation. Biñas stresses that one must pay meticulous attention to details and the gestures of strangers for they are the roots of a possible fight.

The cornerstone of Biñas dynamic arnis is a strong moral philosophy which does not condone the harming of an adversary after they have been disarmed or controlled. Professor Herminio B. Biñas, Sr. idealizes that if attacked and you proceed to disarm and/or control your opponent but do not administer further damage to him, he will surely befriend you. To this end, it is interesting to note, that during World War II, the leader of a Philippine revolutionary group stayed at Biñas' home under his protection from government officials until his arraignment. Perhaps it is this paradox which displays the essence of a true master.

10

Angel Cabales

Cabales Serrada Escrima

My style is the best style.
That's all I can say
based on what I know.
—A. CABALES

Introduction

In 1966, the United States was introduced to the classical Filipino martial art of escrima. In Stockton, California, the late Grandmaster Angel Cabales, with the help of his students, the late Max Sarmiento, and Dentoy Revillar, opened the doors to the first large-scale, commercial school of escrima in the United States.

Angel Cabales was unquestionably one of the greatest *escrimadors* of all time. A testament to this was his roster of students which included the well-known disciples of the late Bruce Lee, Dan Inosanto and Richard Bustillo, as well as former boxing and kickboxing world champion, Graciela Casillas, and martial arts author and movie star, Leo Fong. They studied his revered Cabales serrada escrima system and in turn helped to spread the art through their individual and joint efforts. In fact, Inosanto is quoted in his book, *The Filipino Martial Arts,* as stating: "I feel that Master Cabales, more than any other, is responsible for the emergence of escrima in the United States. By familiarizing me with the twelve angles of attack and the many defenses for each, he has provided me with the bulk of my basics. I consider him highly effective with the short stick (21 to 24 inches in length), and very adept in close-range fighting. He's a true master of the physical art and a man with a wealth of knowledge."

Grandmaster Angel Cabales

General History

The Cabales serrada system evolved from the de cuerdas escrima style of Felicissimo Dizon and concentrates on four areas of study: single stick, empty hands, stick-and-dagger, and single dagger. The following is an account of Grandmaster Cabales the man, his teacher, challenge matches, and his art form.

The de cuerdas escrima system was developed in Sudlon, Cebu, Philippines in the 1800s. It was perpetuated by the now-legendary *escrimador,* Felicisimo Dizon. Dizon was not only a master of the *serrada* (close) and *largo* (long) range escrima styles, but was also an adept *hilot* (healer). He was renowned throughout Manila particularly by way of his fighting skills. Dizon was said to have never turned down a challenge match and was the youngest master in the Philippines to be admitted into the respected Doce Pares Association. The Doce Pares Association had two tests which each of its members must pass in order to be granted final membership approval. The tests were carried out in two tunnels, the first of which was rigged with sticks on its walls that would strike the *escrimador* when passing through; The second tunnel was basically the same but its walls were fashioned with an array of sharp steel blades and the floor and walls were covered with insects some of which were said to have been poisonous. Felicisimo Dizon was the first to pass through these infamous tunnels escaping injury and death. As a result of his obvious abilities the tunnels became known as the de cuerdas tunnels in honor of him.

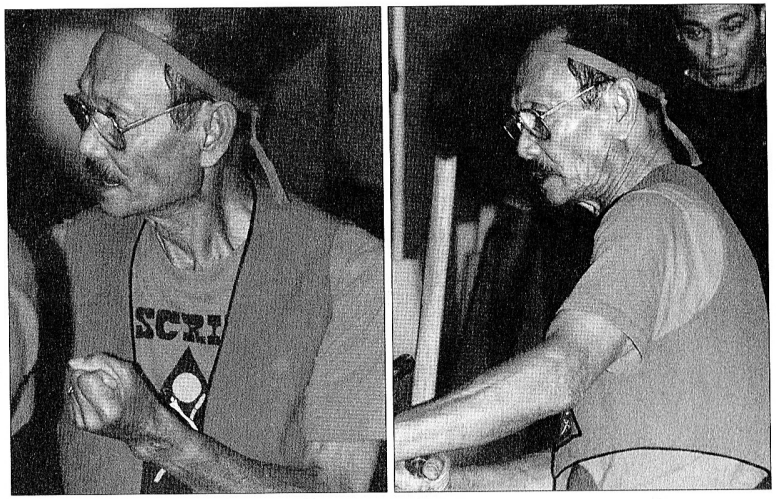
Felicisimo Dizon was an associate of a Philippine army captain. This man, named Villacente, offered to recognize the de cuerdas style and present Dizon with a certificate of verification if, when attacked, Dizon could not be struck. Dizon obliged this man and said that he was so sure of his abilities that he would "prove" his skills by turning his back on Villacente. Captain Villacente then proceeded to attack Dizon but only in vain—His attack was blocked and he was successfully countered against. It was this account of Dizon's skills that legitimate recognition through the armed forces of the Philippines was granted to the de cuerdas escrima style.

Memoirs of a Fighting Man

Angel Cabales was born on October 4, 1917. In his early teens, Cabales was an avid competitor of boxing and wrestling. Although Cabales had heard of Dizon's abilities in escrima he was convinced that these Western arts were the answer to his physical needs. "Once I went into the ring to fight this bigger guy," remembered Cabales, "and I told him to hit me hard. But when he hit me hard on the chin I felt pain in my back and neck. So I then quit boxing and took up escrima."

At the age of fifteen years Cabales became a student of Master Felicisimo Dizon. At that time Dizon didn't believe in teaching a large number of students. Rather, he only taught the members of his "*escrimador* gang." Cabales became a member through the recommendation of his friend who was also a member. Cabales recalled training in the Philippines to be hard: "We would get hit hard but always with control. Dizon would watch two of us practicing and the one who made a mistake would get corrected." Reflex control and coordination are the hallmark of the de cuerdas escrima style of Dizon and hence, the Cabales serrada escrima system, which Cabales later formalized. During the imparting knowledge of escrima it is generally believed that the best way to instruct is not to hurt the student or allow them to injure one another. There is always an attention paid to controlled methods of drilling and sparring.

Although training for Cabales was done in a controlled environment it was no less serious. He had to train with the intention of using his skills for actual confrontations which would inevitably arise at any time, in just about any place. "I was lucky that Dizon taught me his knowledge," stated Cabales, "because every time there was some kind of different style that challenged us, Dizon asked me to counter these guys." Cabales intimated to me that he had never lost a challenge, nor had Dizon. In fact, Angel Cabales, during his time in the Philippines, fought against practitioners of the *abaniko* (fanning), *kabaroan* (long-range), Pampangan (provincial), Tagalog (provincial), and *sinawali* (double-stick) styles. He credits his positive outcomes



to the fact that his *serrada* (close-range) techniques allowed him to successfully counter the wide motions of the *larga mano* (long range) methods.

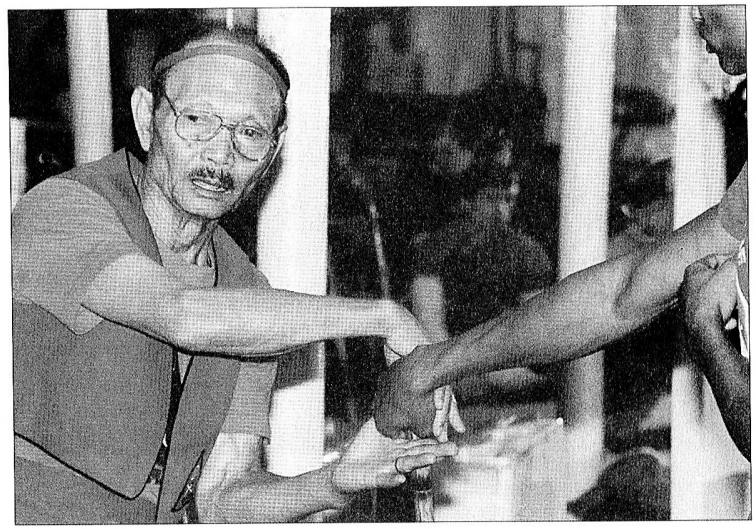
"I [was able to] counter mostly all styles of *larga mano* because Dizon also taught us *larga mano,"* recalled Cabales. "That way when it comes to *larga mano* we know how to counter it. When they play *larga mano* to us we could play that, too, you see." Cabales liked to term his system the "all around style." He insisted that because other systems did not practice the *serrada* techniques they became surprised when engaged in combat. To his disappointment, though, Cabales mentioned that during his time the *serrada* styles were a dying art in the Philippines.

Angel Cabales was a man who liked to fight in challenge matches which, upon occasion, ended in the incidental death of his opponent. In the Philippines Cabales found that people would either issue a direct challenge or just attack you for no apparent reason. "I clean-up on those guys in the Philippines," Cabales asserted. He remembered one fight against a practitioner of *kabaroan:* "He almost broke my nerve but he had no luck. Almost one second and it was finished. I finished him up right away." By having his nerve broken Cabales was referring to the fact that at the onset of the altercation he had tried to employ several "picks" (faking combinations, also known as *enganyo* or feint), to distract his opponent in an effort to strike him. "He blocked all of that and hit me," hesitated Cabales. "But then I knew what he was going to hit me with so I hit his with a short uppercut (with his stick), from underneath." This is the first time that one of Cabales' "picks" had been successfully blocked.

Angel Cabales was a fighting man and this feeling of confidence in his

art was transplanted to America with his arrival in 1939. Cabales was a dock worker on the ship *S.S. San Jose* until he had a challenge match which left a man unconscious and quite possibly dead. Cabales jumped ship off the coast of San Francisco and eventually found work and a new home in Stockton, California, where he lived until his death in 1991. "I fought lots of guys, even here in Stockton," remembered the proud grandmaster. "Even every time Leo Giron brought somebody to my place, my academy, he told me this guy is an *escrimador.* After that, when I tried to practice him (i.e. fight), just one flip (of Cabales' stick), he didn't block it. He said: 'Oh, I'm sorry, I have just eaten a lot of rice.' He doesn't know *serrada!* No matter if its right or left we can block it." Cabales equated his ability to deal with both left and right handed opponents by virtue of his *espada y daga* (sword and dagger) training. Although this method develops the skills of employing different sized weapons it prepares an escrimador for attacks from either side. It is also an effective tool for developing ambidexterity.

One rather humorous incident found Cabales challenged to a knife fight while drinking in a bar in Mountain View, California. "Three guys approached me and say, 'Hey, you want to fight, knife?' I was surprised why he approached me like that," stated the late Grandmaster. "I said okay, where? He said across the street at the gas station. We go and I say that I have no knife and he said, 'I have the knife.' The knife [is the same as the one we] use to cut cauliflower. He threw the knife to me and held the other." Cabales lowered his center of gravity in demonstration of this, and

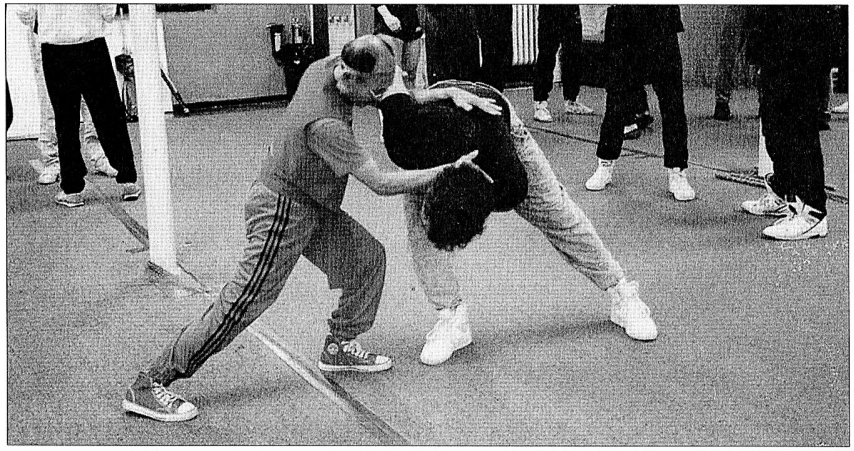


proceeded to close the distance by moving his hand in a figure-eight motion. Cabales remembered the challenger as saying: "Bullshit, here is my knife," as he became surprised at Cabales' evident skills. Cabales then gave the knives to a companion of his and went back into the bar where his challengers went on to buy him drinks all night.

Evolution of Cabales Serrada Escrima

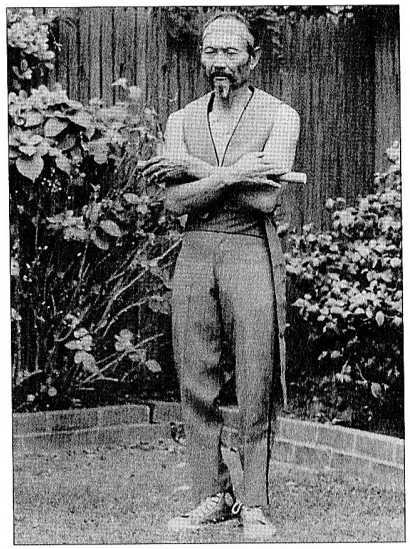
Although Angel Cabales was a master of the de cuerdas escrima style he understood its shortcomings of being a style and having no structured system from which to perpetuate its lessons. With a little encouragement he decided it would be best to bring this Filipino warrior art to the public's attention for the benefit of all and hence began to make some changes.

Cabales' original course of instruction was weapons-based and did not stress the use of the empty hands for self-defense. It can readily be seen that this is the norm rather than the exception when considering the various martial arts of the Philippines. In the Philippines there is a need for such dedication to armed training as most villagers are at least equipped with a machete. On the contrary, walking the streets armed in America is illegal. Cabales recognized this and set his analytical mind upon developing an empty hand system to supplement his weapons art, as the empty hands that was taught to Cabales by Dizon was limited to disarming techniques. In not wanting to study and inadvertently mix another styles with his own evolving system, Cabales adapted the methods of disarming to



techniques of joint-locking and throwing. This, in itself, changed the focus of Cabales' empty hand training, added another dimension to the system without altering its basic technical structure, and made the art acceptable and suitable to the American public. In 1966 Angel Cabales opened the doors to the Cabales Escrima Academy and formed the Cabales Escrima Academy Association of America in Stockton, California. Over the years Cabales continued to evolve his art form into something that was to earn worldwide respect in the martial arts community.

There are two general methods to imparting the Cabales serrada system to a student. The student may be taught three basic single-stick defenses against an angle of attack and then progress to the next when it has been perfected until all twelve angles have been covered. After the fifth angle is introduced, the student is taught the drills of *sangga at patama,* (lock-and-block reflex drill) and *sumbrada* (counter-for-counter drill). This method will lead the practitioner toward the achievement of a basic instructor's ranking in about two years. The second method has the student being taught six to fifteen single-stick defenses, fundamental empty-hand blocks and counters, empty-hand and single-stick disarming methods against each of the twelve angles, as well as reflex drills and single-stick sparring. After approximately five years the student may test for his advanced instructor's ranking. The former is more appropriate and practical for self-defense than the latter in its presentation of material. It is simply more practical to have as basic skill in defending against all of the twelve angle of attack after one years than achieving an expert skill level in only five or six angles during the same time frame. An opponent will not be so polite as to not strike you on an unfamiliar angle. Although both methods of instruction are good,



the second seems to be better suited to those individuals who are already versed in a martial art and can defend themselves.

After promoting a number of people to the basic instructor's rank, the first of which was Dentoy Revillar, Cabales felt that a ranking structure was necessary for his instructors as well as his students. He then set the requirements for the respective ranks of *pang-unang guro* (basic instructor), *pangalawang guro* (advanced instructor), and *pangulong guro* (master instructor). Cabales referred to these ranks as graduate degrees. If you earned the title of *pangulong guro,* you are said to have graduated with a master's degree from the Cabales Escrima Academy. During the quarter century that Grandmaster Cabales publicly taught his warrior art in the United States he had literally thousands of pupils, many of which later became well known figures in the martial arts. To his credit, notably, Cabales only promoted about sixty individuals to the advanced instructor's degree of *pangalawang guro,* and sixteen people to the master's degree of *pangulong guro.* It should also be noted that the requirements for attaining such levels incidentally changed as the years progressed. And so, the instructors of the early days at the Cabales Escrima Academy, who did not remain active into the early 1990s, although legitimately having passed their requirements, did not benefit from the advancement of the Cabales serrada system in both training methods and practical application. Either way, the basics remained the same and it is this training that is the most important element in any martial art.

11

Carlos Escorpizo

Arnis Escorpizo

You will be afraid to tackle anything
if you do not have courage
and perseverance.
—O. C. ESCORPIZO

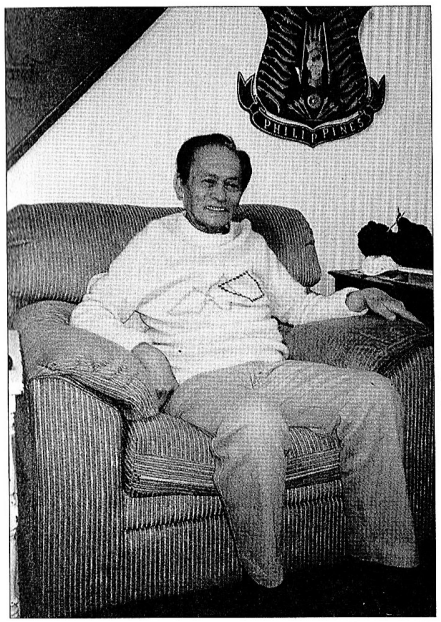
Introduction

Onofre "Carlos" Escorpizo was born in Pangasinan, Philippines, in 1912. He grew up in Baguio where he was the only one among family members interested in martial arts. It was during high school that Escorpizo was introduced to the Filipino martial arts of arnis and eskrima. He perfected the original style of cinco tero (five strikes) under revered master instructors Serilo Cayabyab and Senfroso Mandapak. Master Escorpizo spent a great deal of his youth picking fights as a member of a local street gang. He later repented and joined a local police force to promote safety among the citizens. During World War II, he was taken prisoner four times by the Japanese. He was brutally tortured. His spirit withstood as did his faith in God. Escorpizo relocated to the United States in 1985 and now lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in retirement where he occasionally conducts private classes in arnis. I became a student of Master Escorpizo in 1993, and shortly thereafter conducted the following interview.

An Interview with Carlos Escorpizo

MW : Master Escorpizo, could you please tell me a little something about the martial art that you practice.

CE : It is called armas de mano, or armor of the hands. It was developed

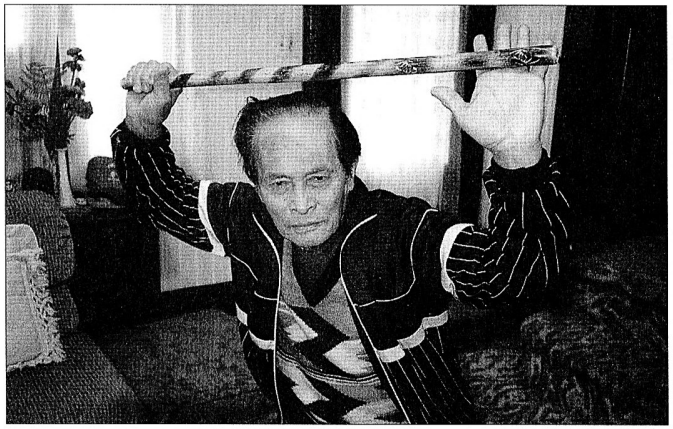


Master Carlos Escorpizo

by Serilo Cayabyab. He was the foremost master of the art in San Carlos, Pangasinan. There was also Semeon Toledo. I got some lessons from Master Cayabyab because it so happens that I was seeing him because he had a beautiful daughter. As I entered the house I could see right in the door several numbers already. I asked him what are those numbers. He said they are the number of strokes in eskrima. He had 150 different strikes. That is too much already. You cannot follow that anymore. Then he told me that the best thing I can do is to master the *cinco tero*. Once you master that you will know all the strokes. 'The numbers I am putting here for you are the ones I use already,' he told me. It was how he defended himself and how he hit. It was taught to me but I never asked the names of the strokes.

MW : What are some of the distinguishing characteristics of arnis Escorpizo?

CE : You know, we use the *cinco tero* method of five strikes. It was originally developed during the time of the Spanish in Pangasinan, Philippines. All other methods of *cinco tero* come from Pangasinan. When we are struck we use the side stepping and block the stick and counter. We have the umbrella style block and the go-with-the-force style blocks. Our counter strikes are aimed at the opponent's forearm or hand. This is the way we can defend ourselves.



MW : Was this your first introduction to arnis or eskrima?

CE : No, I became interested in 1926 when I was attending San Carlos Rural High School. During high school I hung around with a group of guys who took me wherever they go. One day they asked me if I wanted to become a member of the *Compania Trece* (Company Thirteen). I said how can I be a member if I am still new here and do not know the ins-and-outs of your association. They explained to me that before I am allowed to join that association they would have to "try me." Then one night they took me to their meeting. In this association they have a lawyer, doctor, and an arnis instructor. If I wanted to become a member I would be forced to learn arnis. And they want to try my guts, if I can do it or not. We were asked to contribute five *centavos* every month, which was something already before. When the meeting was adjourned we all go down the ladder. When I was going down the ladder somebody kicked my leg near the shin. I rolled down so I got mad. I blamed the other one who was following me and I strike him. We were then stopped and they told me I can go.

MW : That must have been very frustrating to have been invited to a meeting only to be challenged. How did you end up dealing with the encounter?

CE : Probably I can just leave them alone and act like I don't care and quit. They tried to prove me many times. I used to fight them well because I already knew how to fight with the bayonet techniques. Then I found out that every Friday night they have practice in this armas de mano. I learned so much by watching them. Then I would practice in my house with a small *baston* (stick). We were training also how to disarm, but I did not take it too seriously. They later accepted and taught me, but I learned so much just by watching. Also, I was fond of practicing when I am alone or with my best friends. This is how I learned a little bit about this arnis.

MW : What was your relationship to Senfroso Mandapak?

CE : My other instructor was named Senfroso Mandapak. He later became my best friend. He was also a relative of Cayabyab. He is vary fast and later became our deputy chief of police in Baguio. Then we met again and renewed our friendship.

MW : So you were also a police officer. How did you find this line of work after being so formidable in your youth?

CE : Yes, I, too, was a police officer but resigned. I joined the police force after World War II, from 1948 to 1952. I could not support my family on their salary so I quit and I joined the "Voice of America" at the American Information Services where I worked for eight years.

MW : Was it difficult living during the times of the Japanese Occupation?

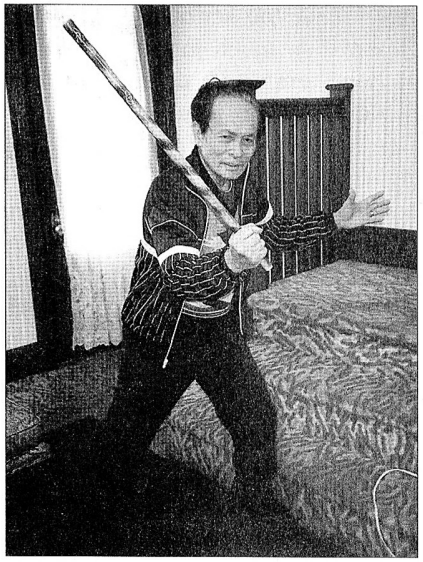
CE : Yes, during the Japanese time of the war I fight with the Japanese. I used to help somebody by fixing things and they in turn would give me something to feed my family. We were stuck in that time. Food was very hard to get in Baguio as all the roads going out were guarded by the Japanese and people were afraid to go there. We suffered there until the Americans came. My father was a soldier and he died in the war. He joined the "Death March" from Bataan to Capas.

MW : I recall you telling me that at some point you, too, were taken prisoner by the Japanese forces. What were the details of this experience?

CE : I was taken by the Japanese four times. They accused me of being an officer of the guerrillas. You know how they tortured the prisoners during the war. They would pore water down my throat and stomp on my stomach until I had water coming out of my mouth and nose. They interviewed me to find out where the guerrillas were but I told them I would not tell them. They hung me up by my thumbs and struck my lower back with a bat. I suffered so much by the Japanese.

MW : Did the Japanese invasion have any effect on the reemergence of arnis or eskrima, or was it much the same as with the Spanish—forced underground?

CE : Eskrima is a very popular sport in the Philippines. I would invite Cayabyab, the instructor there, with a single or double rattan *baston*. One of the guys knows the ins-and-outs of the eskrima. The eskrima was very well known. We were also ruled by the Spanish for almost 400 years. We were the ones who were very much trained in the arnis because during the war between the Filipinos and the Span-



iards we don't have guns, we fought with the long *bolo* or *talibong.* You can never use that if you don't know the way of arnis. That is why we were trained.

MW : Master Escorpizo, do you feel that there is anything positive that came out of the various occupations of the Philippines?

CE : We have inherited something from the Spanish that is not good: segregation of our people. That is why we have been governed for so long. Even here in America the Visayan, Ilokanos, Pampangueños are all segregated in their own organizations. The Visayans here in Philadelphia consider themselves to be the superior ones in our country—as if they know more than the Luzons.

MW : Do you think there is some way to reverse this segregation and help to build a solid foundation from which to build a growing brotherhood among Filipinos?

CE : That is what I am trying to do now through our church is to unite the Filipinos in America. We are being allowed by the Crossroads Community Church to run our Filipino Bible Fellowship in the afternoon after their services. I want to do something by the Bible. Sometimes I go to the Catholic Church every Sunday. It is a good thing when you are with somebody trying to learn the Bible. I want to learn about the Bible. I want to change, Mark, because I was a very bad fellow back there in the Philippines. Now, I sometimes cannot sleep because I am busy praying. I have changed.

In 1928 I was a member of a gang in the Philippines called Bahala Na ("come what may"). I keep on praying for God to forgive me. But I have changed for the better. I decided to join the gang because of the people I was around. In fact all of my *compadres* in Baguio are dead now. I miss them and sometimes I drink too much. Especially when I was an officer of the police department I don't go home without getting drunk. It was free. There is a place in Baguio called Street Forty-Four. They were stealing Chinese wine. They always put me there and ask me if I could stop the fighting because I know all those guys, they are my companions, my friends. So when I tell them to stop the killing they stopped. They called us the Fighting Lions. Every day I fought another group. The guerrillas liked to hang out in groups and I would fight them with my night stick—I go there without a gun. But like anywhere, you must make friends, so I quit the force. Here now in America everybody likes me and calls me *Tatay* (daddy) Carlos.

MW : You mentioned that you were "very bad" back in the Philippines. Do you think this because you used to fight a lot?

CE : We used to like to watch the *sabong* (cock fight)—it is our favorite past time. Sometimes before or after the fight someone would like to test his arnis skills in the cock pit. I remember one time there was this guy who was so proud and boisterous of his skill. He was bigger than the rest of us and was intimidating to the crowd. Everybody backed down from this guy because he talked tough. I got so mad that I ran outside and took a shot of whiskey for courage, as I was still a beginner in arnis. I jumped into the cock pit and accepted his challenge. When he saw how angry I was it startled him and he now only wanted a demonstration. I thought only bad things and when he went to strike me on the head I blocked it and hit him as hard as I could in the ribs with my stick. He bent over in pain. I won but I later felt bad for hitting so hard.

MW : Many *arnisadors* would say that because you were a beginner at that time, you must have won the fight because of an *anting-anting.* Do you believe in the power of such amulets?"

CE : You know those Igorots in the Philippines, when I was working in the mine, they showed me an object that was nicely covered in woven rattan and he called that *witwit* (amulet). He said that if I will take that in a glass of water and then let the woman drink, I can have her at any time I want. At that time courting a Filipina was very hard, it would take you a year. I said I was doubtful to pay so many *pesos* for it so I told my friend about it who was interested. In our boarding house he put it in our food to pick up the maid girl. I

didn't know it was an *anting-anting* until during dinner he told me about it. He was trying to attract her with it so we did not talk. Later in the evening it was the first time that he invited her to eat with us. She said that she was surprised that he was inviting her to eat with us. He said he thought we had to change our ways of treating her. He served her with the purpose of giving her a drink with the *anting-anting*. When we were going to sleep he went to her room thinking that out of the *anting-anting* he would "get her." When he took hold of her she shouted and shouted. It was at that time that I did not believe in this *anting-anting* any more.

MW : I know that you have become a religious man and believe in the power of prayer. Do you believe in the power of *orasyon* in arnis?

CE : My uncle who died a year ago had the *orasyon*. He told me that before he will die he will give it to me. One evening he was met by some bandits while walking home from work. They stopped and did not bother him. Even when he worked he worked the fastest which led the biggest in the group to challenge him. He didn't know that the Puerto Rican was waiting after work for him. The Puerto Rican thought he was afraid to meet him because he was only five-feet, two-inches tall. My uncle decided to say his *orasyon,* he then went down from the building from where he was working. The man was waiting for him and drinking. He took hold of a big rock and threw it at my uncle, but the rock didn't touch him.

I remember my grandfather also had an *orasyon*. I was only four years old at the time but I still remember all of the *tulisanes* (bandits) in our time. One night six of them were riding horses. They came to the house of my grandfather. Although the house was big, he was not rich. They went there and then I had seen through my window my grandmother come out trembling because they already had my grandfather–they wanted to bind him. But he did not give up, he shouted. The *tulisanes* froze and could not move any more. He got their *talibong* and bound them and put them on the horse. I don't know what happened after that because I was already scared and crying. You know that grandfather of mine when he died we saw something magical (an *anting-anting*) under the skin on his ankle. Some of my uncles wanted to get that for themselves but we stopped them and left it alone.

MW : I must say, Master Escorpizo, that at the age of seventy-seven you appear to be in great shape. Would you share with us your secret for maintaining a youthful spirit and physique?

CE : To keep in shape, I don't like to use the washing machine. I prefer to wash my clothes by hand to keep my arms strong. To keep happy I like to entertain company, cook, and make jokes. I also enjoy practicing the arnis and eskrima.

MW : Are there any last words you would like to share with us about your experiences with arnis?

CE : I would just like to say that it is more important that we all get along and have friends. That is what will make this world a good place to live in. The arnis is good for exercise and past time, but fighting is not necessary. I believe in God and the prayers and don't need to prove anything. We must all join together and stop being segregated.

12

Ramiro Estalilla

Rigonan-Estalilla Kabaroan

In the land of the blind,
the one-eyed man is king.
—R. U. ESTALILLA, JR.

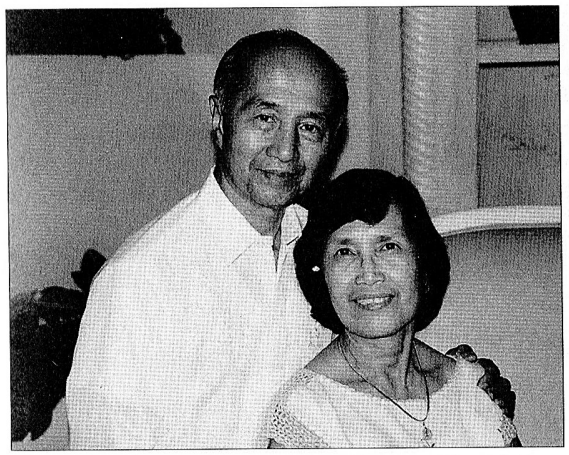
Introduction

Born on January 23, 1930, in San Pablo, Leguna, Philippines, Grandmaster Ramiro Estalilla is among the most humble of *eskrimadors*. Since the age of eleven years, Estalilla has been mastering the skills of weaponry which stem from a tradition going back to the Philippine national heroes, Dr. Jose P. Rizal and Bishop Gregorio Aglipay. An ordained minister, the sixty-three year old Estalilla currently teaches his family art of Rigonan-Estalilla kabaroan in Fresno, California, and conducts seminars around the United States, preaching that students and instructors must learn to humanize the art.

The Legacy of Kabaroan

Ramiro Estalilla had his first glimpse of martial arts at the age of six. In 1936, Estalilla's father, Ramiro A. Estalilla, Sr. began teaching the art of estocada in Nueva Ecija. Ramiro, Sr. had the privilege of studying fencing and eskrima under his grandfather, Major Eusebio Estalilla, who was the fencing and eskrima training partner of General Antonio Luna, and under Bishop Gregorio Aglipay. Having a strong desire to learn the martial arts, Aglipay introduced Ramiro, Sr. to Don Mariano Rigonan of Ilokos Norte who was a well-known *kabaroan* (master of the art of kabaroan).

Ramiro Estalilla, Sr. worked as a chief at *Compania Maritima* (Maritime



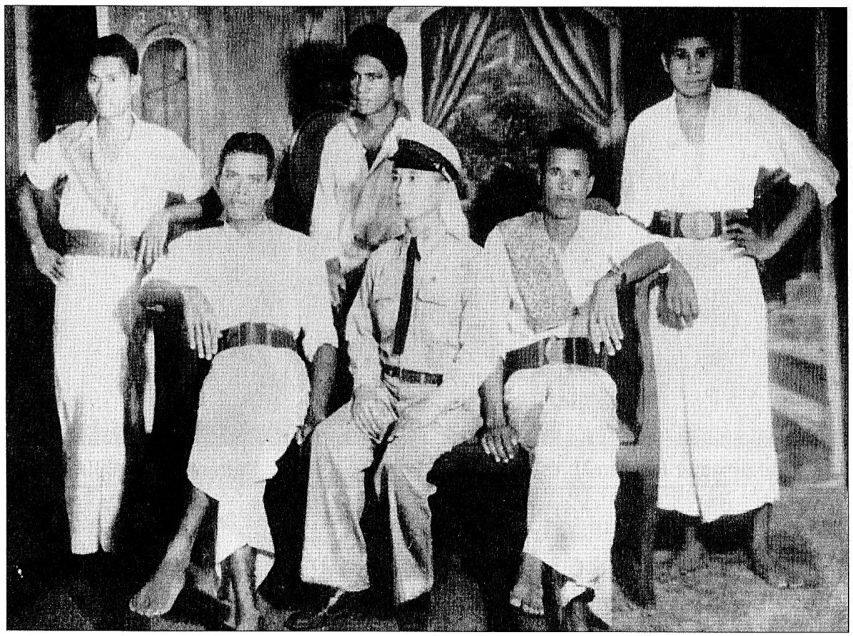
Grandmaster Ramiro U. Estalilla, Jr. with wife

Ramiro A. Estalilla, Sr.

Company) in Cotabato City, Mindanao, from 1937-39. During World War II, Estalilla played a key role in the establishment of a Philippine resistance movement in Mindanao to fight against the troops of General Douglas MacArthur. Estalilla became a self-appointed Colonel in the People's Revolutionary Army. When this group received official recognition as a result of its merging with the Bukidnan Force and the Kabat Force, Estalilla was demoted to the rank of Captain (G-2), and appointed as executive officer in charge of their bolo battalions.

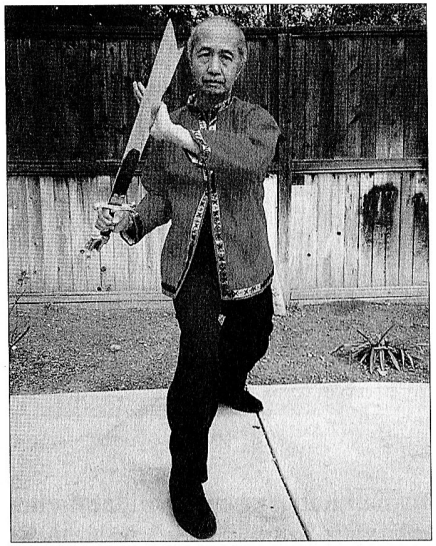
Estalilla's employment at *Compania Maritima* allowed him the opportunity to befriend both Muslim and Christian Filipinos in a time when improper religious affiliation could mean sudden death (depending on where you found yourself). Conflict in Mindanao during this time of war was three fold, finding Filipinos fighting Japanese, Filipinos fighting Americans, and Christian Filipinos fighting Muslim Filipinos. One incident found the Moros asking the Estalilla's to evacuate to the center of the Muslim land so that the family would be saved from a forth-coming raid against Christians. Ramiro, Sr., however, refused stating that both Muslim and Christian Filipinos were his people. "As a result of his comment, the Moros developed a great respect for my father," states Estalilla. "Our place was spared by the raid and my father became an adopted son of the Moro chief, Datu Delanganan."

It was in 1941 that Ramiro Estalilla, Jr. began studying martial arts in Cotabato under his father and other masters such as Magzinido Mamunes, Bralio Roque, and Milagdo Presas. "I had several instructors," recalls Estalilla, "but my father, Ramiro, Sr., and my uncle, Bernardo Banay, who lived in



Zapitan, Zamboanga, were the main ones." Since Mindanao was experiencing the ravages of war, training in *armasan* (the use of weapons) was open to everyone in the *barrio* (town) who wished to defend it against the many *tulisanes* (bandits). "Classes were very informal," states Estalilla. "The masters would demonstrate the techniques and anyone who was interested would get a partner and imitate the teacher. Someone would say 'What if someone attacked you like this,' then each master would show a counter and everyone would attempt to emulate his movements." For the immediate needs of the town's people, training was limited to techniques in the use of the single and double sticks. Estalilla recalls that the practitioners from Zambales used shorter sticks, while those from Cotabato used longer ones. The main concern of these masters, however, was not technical differences between the arts, but how to best instruct the people to defend themselves and their families.

For Estalilla and others who became interested in pursuing the complete art, instruction was then given in the use of the *bangkaw* in conjunction with a shorter or longer stick, or the *sibat*. Training was also conducted with sticks, spears, *pana,* and *patibong* (slingshot). "For purposes of training," recalls Estalilla, "we used sticks to represent shields and swords and knives. We didn't actually use real blades. But we were made to understand what the stick represented." It was in the province of Zamboanga in 1946,



however, that Ramiro began training full time under his uncle, Bernardo U. Banay. After completing one year of high school, Ramiro dropped out to pursue his education in the Filipino martial art of kabaroan. Although Estalilla's father would not teach him during this time, he would test his skills through intense sparring sessions.

In 1949, Ramiro relocated to Manila where he attended the Manila Bible Seminary until 1952. With religion becoming a major part his life, Estalilla moved to Baguio City to attend the Philippine Bible Seminary from 1953-54. It was during this time that Estalilla received instruction under his father upon return trips home. "I also had the privilege of meeting other students and teachers of eskrima," recalls Estalilla. "From 1957-67 I was the director of one school in Manila called Filipino Martial Arts Academy. Then, in 1962, I became an employee of Far East Broadcasting Company. I have met other masters such as Master Candido Pecate at his school on Quezon Boulevard in Manila. We got acquainted with each other and became friends but didn't exchange ideas. I wanted to meet sikaran master Meliton Geronimo, but didn't have the chance."

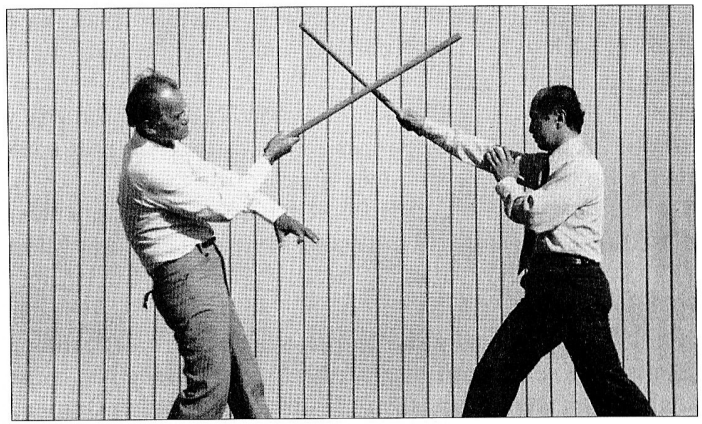
Meaning and Structure of Kabaroan

The name of the Filipino weapons system that Ramiro Estalilla inherited from his father is known as kabaroan, or the Rigonan-Estalilla system of kabaroan to be exact. The origin of the art and its name is somewhat ambiguous. One such theory holds that since eskrima was practiced in the

town of Kaba, where Estalilla's father was born, it was subsequently called kabaroan. Another theory holds that since its technical characteristics were the "newest" (during the time of its conception), as opposed to the "older" (or classical) techniques, the practitioners called it *kabaroan,* meaning "new." A third theory posits that practitioners of the art in Nueva Viscaya were generally the town leaders or barons *(baroan).* The prefix *ka* is a term of respect toward someone, thus *ka-baroan* indicates a general respect shown toward the leaders of the community who practiced the art. Students of the art would say "lets practice kabaroan"—the art of the barons. Regardless of its exact meaning, the art of kabaroan is a weapons-based martial art developed in Luzon, Philippines.

Regardless of how one interprets the meaning of the term, the art form is an interesting mix of old *(kadaanan)* and new *(kabaroan)* weapons techniques found in the Ilokos and Nueva regions of Luzon, Philippines. In general, Kabaroan employs weapons which are relatively bigger, longer, and heavier than the average eskrima or arnis stick, and embraces three subsystems: *sencilla* (one-handed, single weapon system), *bambolia* (two-handed, single weapon system), and *compuesta* (two-handed, double weapon system). Defensive techniques follow two primary blocking methods: *tiradin* (force-to-force blocks at close range), and *todosan* (going-with-the-force blocks at long range).

There are four stages a student must pass through in order to master this art. The first stage encompasses the demonstration of forms, strikes, and defenses by the instructor which are then to be mimicked by the student. Footwork is incorporated to these "static" techniques in order to make them "fluid." The second stage involves planned and controlled striking and defensive maneuvers that are executed in prearranged, repetitive drills.



Estalilla and Pampango *eskrimador* Amado Sunga, 1979

Students pair-off and proceed through various patterns of offensive and defensive techniques in an effort to gain an understanding of the many applications of a single movement. In the third stage students are asked to perform a free-style solo form of their creation. Similar to the shadow boxing used by Western boxers, these solo forms are spontaneous and develop in the student a sense of spontaneity and creativity. Free-sparring as a demonstration of the students mastery of the basic techniques is the essence of the fourth and final stage. This stage finds the practitioners displaying highly controlled strikes and defensive maneuvers drawn from individual experiences acquired through hours of dedicated training. It is at this point that one is said to be a practitioner of kabaroan.

Twenty Years in the United States

"My father was a lay minister," candidly mentions Estalilla." After the war he said that he found out in the fox holes there are no atheists; he used to be one. He had a bible and in discussions I got absorbed into it and we were converted to Christianity." On February 1, 1976, Estalilla was invited to the United States to chaperone four youths who were going to attend a bible camp. Upon his arrival, he was also invited to lecture for three weeks at a Filipino Immigrant Camp. It was during this initial forty-five day stay in America that Estalilla was invited by the church to remain. "I had reservations at first since my family was in the Philippines and it was martial law," recalls the Minister. "I didn't know what I should do. I prayed often and finally decided to stay." With the help of the church petitioning on his behalf, Estalilla was granted immigrant status in fifty-two days. He then petitioned for his family to be able to immigrate to America. Although it

took only two weeks for approval, the Estalilla family was unable to leave the Philippines for another three years. Although initially residing in Fresno City, California, as an ordained minister Estalilla was soon given a church to minister in Orange Cove, where he continued to preach for nine years. It was in Orange Cove, that Estalilla met Amado Sunga, an *eskrimador* from Pampanga, with whom he exchanged ideas.

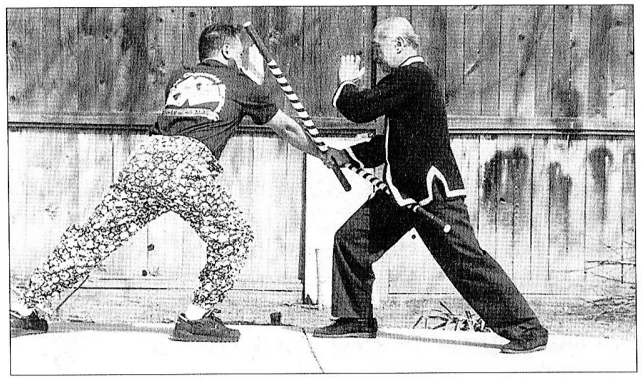
In 1920, Estalilla's father came to the United States to study law at Saint Paul College in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He worked at the Minneapolis Athletic Club as a waiter and taught the art of kabaroan there from 1920 to 1929. Following in his father's footsteps, Ramiro, Jr. began teaching the Rigonan-Estalilla system of kabaroan to a group of older Filipinos. "My first students were senior citizens," recalls Estalilla, "who had come to this country when they were youngsters." In 1985, Estalilla left Orange Cove to permanently reside in Fresno. Rather than open a commercial school of kabaroan, he became an instructor at Fresno City College. Following the tradition of maintaining a private class of dedicated pupils, Estalilla also taught a select group of students in his backyard.

"I introduced the art at Fesno City College within their Physical Education Department. Classes were nine weeks in duration and open to all students attending the college." Estalilla taught there for three years then relocated to California State University to work as a secretary in the office of testing services. "I applied to the Physical Education department through the extended education department to teach the art during the day," recalls Estalilla. "It wasn't until 1990 that I was given permission to teach kabaroan. I teach in the day to college students as part of their physical education requirements, and at night to anybody who wishes to learn the art."

Ramiro Estalilla has also become known as a dynamic seminar instructor and has traveled around the country to teach others the art of kabaroan. He has conduct seminars in Berkeley, San Diego, and San Jose, California, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and Baltimore, Maryland, among other cities. Since Ramiro fancies himself as an "inter-stylist" he has also hosted seminars for other practitioners such as Amante Mariñas of pananandata Mariñas and Alfredo Bandalan of Doce Pares. Presently, Estalilla can be found teaching kabaroan in his backyard and for the Sports Arts Center program, called Break The Barriers, Inc.

Guiding Principles

"I have been teaching for Break The Barriers for one year now," Estalilla proudly notes. "I take on all students and try to inculcate in them the philosophy of having a good character and the words of God, the Master, who said 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.' Although



I do not mix Christianity with kabaroan I stress moral development and spirituality. I insist that my students use their skills in kabaroan for the good of all. My father would often remind me that no matter how deadly you may be, you must contain your art within the sphere of good motives against a background of peaceful intentions."

It is this background of peaceful intentions which led Estalilla to create peace between two of the leading exponents of Filipino martial arts residing in the United States. "At the big eskrima tournament in San Jose in 1987, I met the great grandmasters, Leo Giron and Angel Cabales. It appears that they were at odds for about twenty years. I thought this was not a good spirit to have and spoke with each of them separately and told them we are at the ending of our lives and let us be friends. I told *manong* Giron that he was my friend, and I told *manong* Cabales that he, too, was my friend. I then suggested that there was no reason that we could all not be friends. After that they talked at length, and decided to let bygones be bygones. They shook hands and then sat together and posed, along with Grandmaster Ben Largusa and myself, for a historic photograph. I am elated that it took a minister to bring together the two great grandmasters of the United States, who also happen to be my friends."

As an ordained minister, it is only natural that Estalilla's Biblical education, religious training, and spiritual experience have influenced his philosophy and practice of the martial arts in general, and *dalan ti armas* (way of hand weapons) in particular. As a Christian minister and Bible teacher Grandmaster Estalilla advocates a life of being at peace with and doing good to all persons. "As a natural extension of my religious orientation," States Ramiro, "my life and martial art teachings and practices reflect, and are governed by, three great moral principles: the principle of life, the principle of love, and keeping all levels of force to a minimum."

Estalilla asserts that the force of words and the powers of persuasion

and reason are primary in all confrontations. One must attempt to use persuasion and negotiation before employing a greater level of force. The next level is that of minimum force which encompasses various empty-hand self-defense techniques. Estalilla notes, however, that one must keep in mind that even the empty hands can be lethal weapons if not properly controlled. Medium force (level three) allows the use of hand held weapons for self-defense. He is quick to note that only when the first two levels of force have been exhausted may the use of hand weapons be employed. Estalilla ascribes the final level of force to the employment of firearms. This level is a last resort in self-defense as it usually results in death. He notes that responsibility and a clear and focused mind will dictate which level of force is deemed necessary during any physical confrontation.

"Life is sacred. This is a basic, underlying, *a priori* principle," asserts Estalilla. "No person has the right to take another person's life. That prerogative belongs only to the Creator, Lord God. The right to live must be respected. Disrespect for life is a disregard for God who commanded, 'Thou shall not kill.' Because life is sacred, the law is moral and eternal." Estalilla also strongly believes that no person should take the law into his or her own hands. Great care and prudence, therefore, must be taken and exercised by the martial arts practitioner. The life of an opponent must be respected as the kabaroan respects his own.

"I have never had to use my skills in self-defense," notes the grandmaster with a smile on his face, "I simply teach. As a minister, I try to conduct myself in accordance with the code of conduct outlined in the scriptures. To close, I suggest that in the practice of the art let us humanize the art, civilize the artist and refine the system within the spirit of the Master's golden rule: 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.' If I can help somebody or teach somebody as I pass along then my living will not be in vain. Let me do it now as I will not pass this way again."

13

Ray Galang

Hagibis

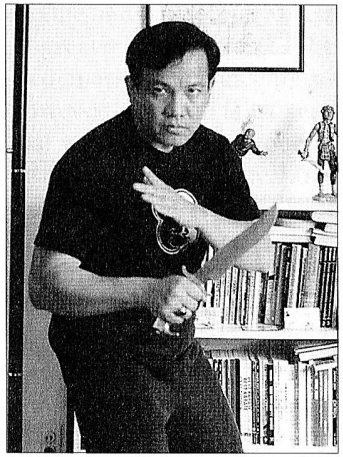
Although we do not totally dismiss
the advantage of using existing clothing
for effective throws, chokes, and locks,
we prefer to practice
under less-than-ideal conditions.
—R. S. GALANG

Introduction

Master Ray Galang was born on March 13, 1946 in Santa Cruz, Manila, Philippines—the heart of Chinatown. From the Philippines and Australia to the United States his name is synonymous with quality work and earnest promotions of any number of Filipino styles. He is a founding member of Bakbakan International, the editor of two newsletters, *Vortex* and *Phoenix,* and is the editor for Socorro Books, a martial arts publisher in Manila, run by Alexander Co. Aside from his editorial and promotional efforts he is the founder of the Hagibis combat system, the adopted throwing and grappling art of Bakbakan International, and the chief instructor of the BCI Martial Arts Club in Jersey City, New Jersey (United States).

Early Training

As a young boy Galang was an avid photographer and it was this interest that led to his first introduction to the martial arts. At about the age of twelve years he was witness to a martial arts demonstration of the seven *katas* of judo. He became so fascinated by the grace and beauty of the



Master Rey Galang

demonstration that he naturally took photos of them and literally hounded his uncle, Metro Manila Police Major Jesus Songco, to buy him a uniform. Daddy Pulis, as Galang called his uncle, provided him the funds to purchase the uniform thus becoming his first sponsor into the arts. Other sponsors soon to follow were his uncles, Constante de la Cruz, Israel Lorenzo, and Ernie Chua who taught him native Filipino self-defense and military hand-to-hand techniques. A neighbor, Inocente Bonabon, who came from the Bicol region of the Philippines, taught him the Balintawak arnis as well as the arts of panantukan (boxing) and dumog (grappling).

Galang's formal classroom training in the martial arts began in 1962, with the study of ju-jutsu and judo. He studied at the Manila YMCA Judo Club under Hiroshi Sensei, a 6th Dan certified by the Kodokan (world judo headquarters) and with Master Bautista, who was the secretary for the Philippine Amateur Judo Association. Then he studied the sunkite arnis system under master Tatang Carunggay, who passed away in 1968 at the age of sixty-seven years. "He was one of those few old masters that I have met who was not impressive when he was demonstrating, but in actual free sparring, he was devastating," remembers Galang. "I have never seen another old man who trembled so much from muscular spasm when he demonstrated and taught, yet apply his skills with such accuracy and speed."

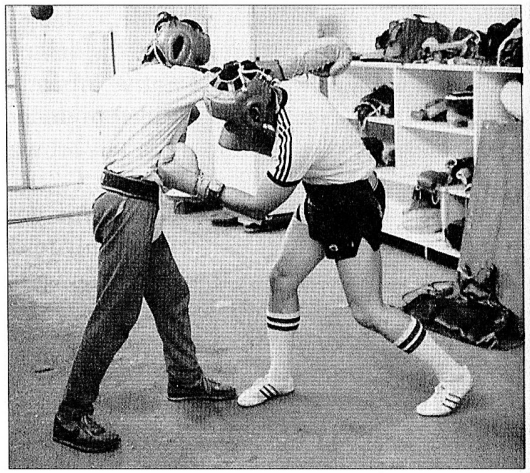
Galang then pursued the study of sikaran under Master Candido Pecate at the YMCA. Pecate, who is also a karate and arnis instructor, conducted his classes upstairs at the very YMCA where Galang was studying ju-jutsu and judo. Occasionally, sikaran Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo would drop by to offer further instruction. After befriending some of Pecate's karate students, Galang and his classmates issued a challenge to "compare notes"

of ju-jutsu and judo against karate. Galang and his friends were out maneuvered as Pecate's students had the advantage of also coming from ju-jutsu and judo, as well as the native arts of eskrima and dumog.

A few years later Galang decided to undertake the study of aikido. One of the highlights of his training in this art was his chance to study directly under Koichi Tohei Sensei. Galang studied with Tohei Sensei while the latter was instructing at the Manila Aikido Club and also at the Caltex Aikido Club. Since Tohei Sensei was only to be in Manila for a short period, Galang knew it would be tough to train with him since he was not part of the Manila Aikido Club's "inner circle." Being the resourceful person that he is, Galang used his relationship with his uncle to his advantage. "I went to visit my uncle, Daddy Pulis, who was the Secretary to the Chief of Police. I was at his office when Tohei Sensei's group arrived and they were surprised," states Galang. "I guess from my impish smile they knew that they were going to be able to do the exhibition that they wanted because I already spoke to my uncle. From then on I became part of their inner circle." Ben Gallarpe was the chief instructor at the Manila Aikido Club and was assisted by Ernie Talag. Although Talag concentrates on his aikido training he is also an associate member of Bakbakan International and student in kali Ilustrisimo.

In late 1966, Galang traveled to Davao, Mindanao, southern Philippines. He stayed there for a while and taught aikido at the University of Mindanao's College of Criminology for a semester and a half. The regular instructors at the College invited him to participate in an exhibition and to give a demonstration of aikido. Since Galang had no students of his own the instructors volunteered some of their students to do the demonstration with him. However, what was to be a structured demonstration became a free-fighting exhibition. "They had three of their students rush me," remembers Galang, "but I gave no quarters. I did not come all the way down south to be humiliated. I can still vividly recall the event and I'm very pleased with my performance. To sum it up, I had several of their students lining up to study under me after that. Strangely enough the resident instructors became very courteous to me after that demonstration. Henceforth, I had the College of Criminology gymnasium literally at my disposal at any time."

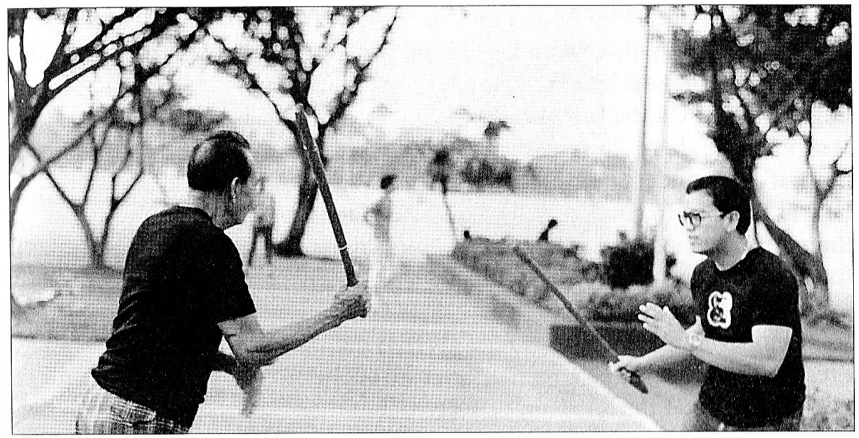
Upon his return to Manila Galang continued his practice of karate, judo, ju-jutsu and the local Filipino arts. He then became involved in taekwondo, which was being taught across the street—near the same village where Master Christopher "Topher" Ricketts lived. Topher had a reputation of offering a challenge to spar anyone, at any time. Galang and his group were surprised that Ricketts had challenged their instructor, Yong Man Park, who then held a 5th Dan black belt under the International Taekwondo Federation. "I figured that if he challenged Park to a sparring match he



probably had something," rationalized Galang. He then asked and was given permission to meet and train with Topher's group. He was surprised to find that they were heavily into sagasa, a Filipino karate/kickboxing system. This type of training was novel and tough for the time given the prevalence of point-sparring. All of the years Galang had spent training in the various arts only scored him a single point; he was utterly demolished. It was this incident that changed the course of Galang's training methods and from that day on he declined to pursue the other arts he had studied in an effort to fully delve into Rickett's system. Galang trained heavily with Ricketts for at least six months before he went back to his former arts to compare progress. "There was a new breed of people from the Philippine Air Force training with Master Park when I returned. They didn't know me, they just knew I was an old student," recalls Galang. "Some of them were over confident and challenged me to spar. I thoroughly appreciated the hard and intensive training Topher dished out as I practically played with my opponents. To say the least they were surprised as I eliminated them one by one. Because I had been training in full-contact my timing was keen and my strikes were accurate." Ricketts' group was then known as the Budokan Brotherhood which later became known and respected as Bakbakan International.

From Budokan to Bakbakan

Over the next couple of years the Budokan group developed and grew so Christopher Ricketts decided to gather all the senior students together and restructure the organization. "We decided we should formalize our group



Ilustrisimo training Galang in the Luneta

in terms that we had all of this different knowledge," recalls Galang. "Also, people were wondering why we were claiming a Japanese name when we were teaching Filipino martial arts. And so Bakbakan International was born." Actually, the term Bakbakan came about by strange coincidence. Galang and another Bakbakan senior, Rodrigo "Ding" Binay, individually suggested it. Ray recalls hardly seeing Ding at the training gym around that time due to work schedules, and that it was in fact Topher who said that he and Ding had the same idea in naming it Bakbakan. Before the Budokan Brotherhood adopted Bakbakan as its name they had to think about it. The term connotes a fight, actually, a free-for-all. They then got the rest of the seniors together and decided that the term is harsh, rough, challenging, aggressive and they wondered if they could live up to it. They decided yes, and Bakbakan International was loosely organized in 1968.

Rey Galang moved to Sydney, Australia in 1975. There he established a club at the YMCA. He was teaching sagasa kickboxing and some sikaran-based material, as well as Balintawak arnis. Galang also began teaching kali Ilustrisimo although at that time he was still in his early years in the art. The Filipino martial arts were well received in Australia and grew to a point where he had a chance to demonstrate for Kyokushin-kai karate founder Masutatsu Oyama, in 1976. It was while in Australia that Galang was appointed to the position of officer in the Australian Ju-Jitsu Federation and also associated with members of the Federation of Australian Karate Organization. He was also a visiting instructor at Tom Slaven's kempo karate school. Galang also befriended noted tai chi chuan expert, Earle Montaigue, when he was in his early years.

After Ray established a Bakbakan branch in Sydney, he started organiz-

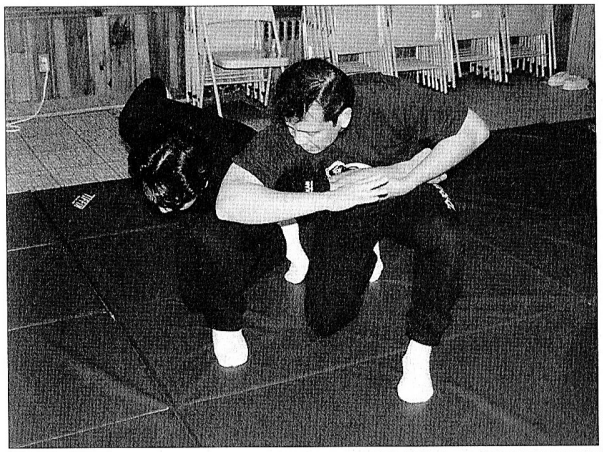
ing seminars to further perpetuate the Filipino arts. One of the first seminars sponsored by Bakbakan was called the "Master of Arnis." The seminar featured instruction by Ray Galang, Christopher Ricketts, Tony Diego, and Edgar Sulite. "On the first day of the seminar, which was held in my club," remembers Galang, "Raymond Floro knocked on my door and introduced himself as a student of Balintawak arnis Master Tony Dedal. He said that he was advised to come in to broaden his horizons. We welcomed him and Raymond has not left the Bakbakan group since. In fact, he is an active kali Ilustrisimo instructor. The art that was popular at that time," adds Ray, "was Remy Presas' modern arnis. Most of our Australian students came from modern arnis but have since given their loyalties to Bakbakan. Remy Presas appointed me as commissioner for modern arnis in Australia in the mid 1970s but I declined due to my commitment to Bakbakan International and kali Ilustrisimo."

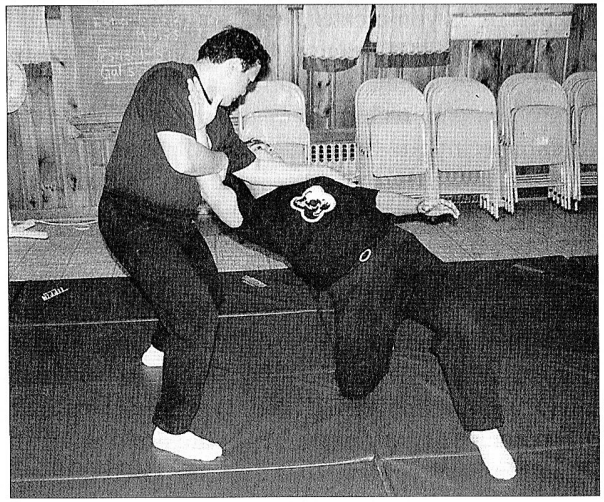
Through the efforts of Ray Galang the image of the Bakbakan group went from a basic roughness to tough with a touch of class. He has helped to design and print new logos and uniforms, and produce instructional manuals and video tapes. His current efforts are directed toward improving Bakbakan's quarterly publication, *Phoenix*.

The Hagibis Combat System

Ray Galang developed the grappling art of hagibis during the early days of Bakbakan International. It was developed to fill a void within the Bakbakan group for a more combat oriented grappling art. In any given Bakbakan training session one will find sweeps and throws being executed, at any time, during sparring sessions. Whereas Galang found the ju-jutsu and judo techniques to be good, he did not find them particularly effective against an aggressively attacking opponent. In ju-jutsu and judo, techniques are practiced and perfected in an atmosphere of cooperation amongst training partners. Conversely, hagibis was developed to deal with random, pattern-free attacks and its exponent's take advantage of the position and momentum of an opponent to effect the proper execution of its techniques.

"I studied opportunities," states Galang, "where a position or a leverage just happened or was created by the mere fact that people were moving during combat." Galang started learning how to effectively pin, trap, or restrain an opponent who was aggressively motivated. What came of this study were methods of taking an opponent into your own motion during the course of a counter maneuver. "I did away with grabbing the clothes, belts, etc.," states Galang, "because grabbing them is not always possible in real life. In the Philippines, especially, people wear light-weight clothes, and if you grab someone by their shirt it will most likely tear. Instead, we





learned how to trap and lock the limbs to execute throwing techniques. Although we do not totally dismiss the advantage of using existing clothing for effective throws, chokes, and locks, we prefer to practice under less than ideal conditions."

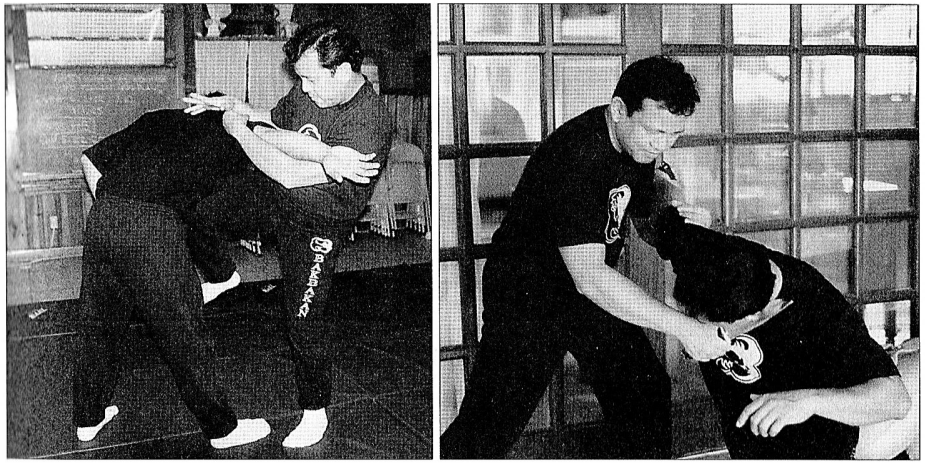
This is in direct contradiction to the various locking and grappling arts of other countries where the act of grabbing parts of an opponent's uniform or clothing is necessary for a given technique to work. Emphasis in hagibis techniques, rather, is placed on movements of down-weighing because of the simple fact that the average Filipino is of a small stature and must avoid force-to-force encounters. The use of down-weighing is coupled with leverage to create a momentum and force necessary to execute a

given throw. *Trankadas* (joint locks), are also emphasized in hagibis because no matter how big a guy is the joints are equally sensitive and subject to dislocation or breakage. The hagibis practitioner not only knows how to apply these techniques at full speed and strength but how to counter them as well. "That is the difference in hagibis," asserts Galang. "In hagibis we will emphasize one locking technique and then will give you several variations or releases and counter techniques." This method of training is based on the concept that there are only certain ways to be grabbed but several way to counter such techniques. The drills and training methods found in hagibis have been structured to support this hypothesis. Hence, one will find the majority of exercises being performed in drills or "series," as they are known. "We execute technique after technique in a set pattern. Then we have the same set with variations. There is no set rule on when to apply these techniques; again, they are opportunities. Take them as they happen or as you create them," states Galang.

These opportunities may happen as a result of variables such as timing, speed, coordination, perception, and skill-level. Sometimes you may initiate a trapping technique or *enganyo* (feint) in an effort to get somebody to do a technique that you wish to counter. "We do that a lot with back sweeps," notes Galang. "We encourage that because we know how to throw the guy afterwards. Actually, we have a lot of sacrifice throws but we don't dwell too much on the group grappling because that doesn't work too well in the Philippines as you can get stabbed while you are busy trying to pin or subdue an opponent on the ground." Hagibis take-downs emphasize throwing an opponent in a way to seriously hurt him. The hagibis practitioner learns to forget about being graceful or acting as a gentleman when in a fight. Rather, practitioners are concerned with putting an opponent out of commission temporarily, to then deal with the other opponents, should it be necessary. Galang states that although hagibis does include techniques of choking and strangling it does not depend on them too much as they are not the answer to combating multiple opponents.

"We have pressure points and nerve strikes in hagibis," adds Galang. "Years ago some of the Bakbakan seniors and I went to the people who were doing massage and bone-setting (hilot) in the Philippines. They gave us a very nice overview of all the points on the body. We use them during the *gunting* (scissors strikes) and grappling techniques, and even when just subduing someone." These nerve striking methods were an integral part of buno, so it was naturally to become a part of hagibis.

Hagibis, like other grappling arts, begins with instruction in the basic locking and controlling techniques. The students are initially taught the fundamental and necessary techniques of how to absorb throws and locks, how to break fall, and joint limbering exercises. Emphasis is later placed in



four areas: how the joints work, how to apply pressure, and how to prevent a release or counter; how to counter the techniques; how to neutralize an opponent's technique allowing for your escape; and how to apply a lock and knowing when to release it to be able to continue the fight and apply other techniques. After these four areas are learned and perfected the students move on to the actual throwing techniques. This consists of applying a lock and then executing a throw. "When executing a throw," explains Galang, "we emphasize the movement and position of the body with the momentum. If the momentum does not exist we create it by down-weighting or by sudden escapes. If the momentum exists we just ride it and 'tighten the circle' or make what we call the 'whirlwind' or hagibis. The term *hagibis,* is actually the sound created by a very fast moving object. We translate it to 'whirlwind' for want of a shorter term."

Training in hagibis assumes that the student already knows how to fight using panantukan and sikaran. Hagibis students already know sagasa. If they didn't, they would be unable to efficiently and effectively apply the art. Hagibis by itself would be too much of a sacrifice; Rather, it cooperates with the techniques of punching and kicking. If you cannot already defend yourself against such techniques it would be a great disadvantage to attempt a hagibis technique. Although some people don't agree with this requisite, you must know empty-hand fighting before you go into hagibis because it was developed to be applied in combat, not in a set-up situation. That is why one will never see a separate tournament or contest for hagibis. It merely comes together, along with panantukan, sikaran, and kali Ilustrisimo, in a Bakbakan training session.

14

Meliton Geronimo

Sikaran

The arnis stick is the extension
of sikaran's empty hand blocks.
—M. C. GERONIMO

Introduction

Sikaran is a classical Filipino foot-fighting art unique in its application of techniques and their target selection. This Filipino kicking system, a hobby of the native Baras farmers, became popular in the provinces surrounding Manila during the 1940s. By the 1950s, sikaran had become widely known and was accepted as a legitimate art in such places as Japan and Korea. The man responsible for the structuring and perpetuation of sikaran as a contemporary martial art and sport is retired Lieutenant Colonel Meliton C. Geronimo, the Mayor of Baras, Philippines. So effective and unique are some of its kicks that the art of sikaran has led many of its practitioners to win a number of open Asian sparring championships; It has also led several arts in Korea to adopt its trademark spinning kick, the *biakid.*

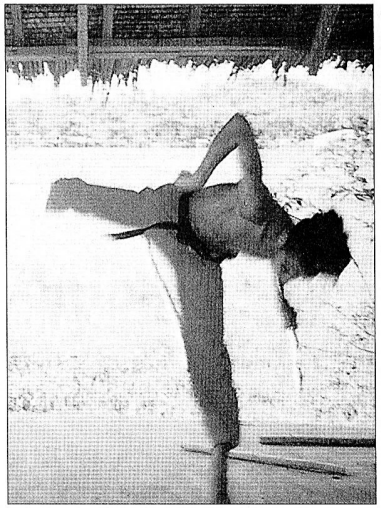
Technical Rational

Traditionally, sikaran was played during the farming dry seasons by two individuals, or teams, within the perimeters of a rice paddy. Since the time of its founding in the early 1920s by Cipriano Geronimo, sikaran has developed a body of highly disabling kicking techniques termed *panghilo* or knock-out blows. One of the fatal techniques, the *biakid,* is a kick delivered exactly the opposite of the karate roundhouse kick—the force is concentrated on the back of an opponent's head. "If I am facing my opponent," states Mayor Geronimo, "I can deliver my kick at his back. No other system can kick you in the back from the front position, that is the *biakid* of sikaran. You see, in karate they can just deliver the kicks from the front or side. With sikaran, I can break your ribs or then the back of your neck even though we are facing each other. The *biakid* is the trademark of sikaran. It is fatal."

Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo

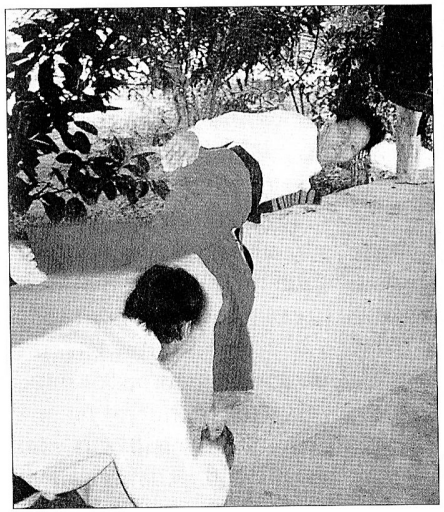
In its application of technique sikaran has two divisions: sport and combat. Self-defense is combative where the sport-form is considered to be play. For example, in a self-defense situation, in wanting to disable an opponent, the sikaran exponent will use either the heel or ball of the foot. In its sport-form the instep of the foot is used when kicking an opponent to reduce the chances of serious injury. The many kicking techniques of sikaran are said to be essential for self-defense. Sikaran practitioners believe they hold an advantage if attacked because their trained feet afford them a longer reach and stronger defensive weapon than do the hands. Geronimo believes that if one is not trained in sikaran they will have trouble defending themselves against it. The sikaran stylist is often compared to a ballet dancer—he moves with grace, agility, and speed. However, it must be noted that without flexibility one can not become highly skilled at sikaran. Like a ballet dancer, the students of sikaran spend countless hours patiently stretching the necessary muscles to facilitate the proper kicking actions.

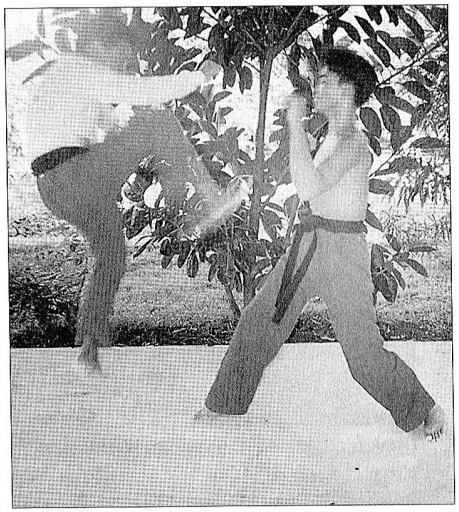
In the sport of sikaran there is a ruling of a winner. In combat, there is no ruling—anything goes. In combat, kicks are delivered to the legs, in addition to an array of sweeping techniques utilized by the sikaran exponent. "One of my uncles here in Baras," remembers Geronimo, "has a very strong knee. He will just kick you using his knee and you cannot get up—



you are paralyzed—that is the difference with sikaran." Similar to the stories of the late Kyokushin-kai karate master, Masutatsu Oyama, sikaran is also noted for having utilized its techniques in knocking out a bull. As Geronimo recalls, "Sometimes our students who specialized on kicks using the ball of the foot have knocked out the bull. If you hit it in the temple, the top of the skull, the bridge of the nose, or the throat it will die. It is very easy to use your foot in sikaran this way."

Since sikaran is scarcely an empty-handed art it follows that its kicking techniques are well rooted in a scientific knowledge of body dynamics, target selection, and defensive concepts. In fact, the very stances that are used are dependent on an opponent's attacking maneuvers. "If your opponent is aggressive you have to use the forward stance," explains Geronimo. "It depends upon the attacker. If its a freestyle match we use the cat stance *(tayong pusa)* in combination with the back stance—a more flexible defensive position." Geronimo further went on to explain that if you are facing an aggressive opponent, you must break his force by being in a forward stance. If an opponent is attacking you from your side, you must be flexible and agile in your movements and transitions from stance to stance. Geronimo likens the evasive movements of sikaran to those of Mohammed Ali: "Sometimes he could not be hit from the front because of his tremendous mobility." The sikaran practitioner is never anxious or overtly aggressive as he may fall into the trap of an opponent's defensive system. Rather, he prefers to counter-attack by waiting for his opponent's first move, filling in his open areas, and finishing him off with a combination of devastating kicks.





Sikaran in Perspective

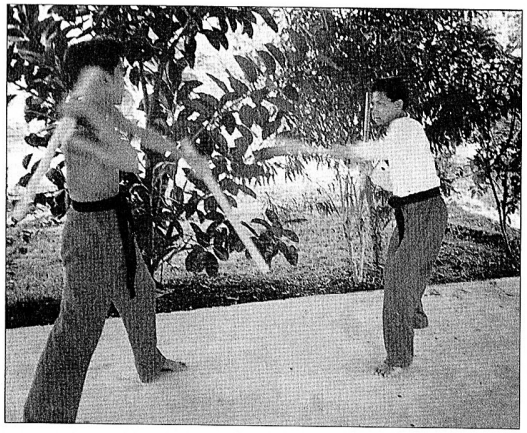
Sikaran is a style of Philippine foot-fighting. It was initially developed by farmers as a past time activity. The farmers would designate an area of the rice paddy, a circle with a twenty-five foot circumference, called the *pitak*. They would rely on the proper use of their naturally strong legs to drive their opponents outside of the circle with a barrage of kicking techniques.

The test of one's skill level in sikaran is proven in the *pitak*. A student wishing to prove himself would do so by standing in the center of the circle and challenging all opponents. Like a "round-robin" competition, the one remaining in the circle is the winner and must then fight the next opponent until he, too, is defeated by being kicked out of the boundary. The circle is the ruling of sikaran; there is no referee. The champion is called the *hari* of sikaran. You are the champion or king until someone at some point bests you in the circle fight.

The term sikaran comes from the root word *sikad,* which is the motion made in order to initiate a leg motion. *Sikad* is the motion found between standing still and the initiation of a kick. The term sikaran is native to the province of Baras, Philippines.

The uniform of sikaran consists of a mere pair of red pants, a belt, and a shirt, as this was the daily clothing the farmers. The only exception to this uniform is the donning of the traditional karate *gi* (uniform) during international competitions—the expected dress code.

The founder of sikaran is Cipriano Geronimo, Meliton's father. He is now over 100 years old and is known as "the last of the sikaran *haris*



(kings, or old masters) of the past century." It was Cipriano who handed down the game to Meliton, who in turn conducted practical research and perfected the art in many ways, including altering its basic structure to facilitate a more combative application. "My father just gave me the sikaran technique. I practiced them a hundred times, that's all. No *kata* like now. I created *katas* (forms) so its more modern in our time. In fact, I perfected the circle combat by using my *katas.*" To ensure that sikaran would not fade into oblivion, the younger Geronimo founded the Kapatiran Sikaran-Arnis ng Pilipinas (Sikaran-Arnis Brotherhood of the Philippines) in 1958. Thirty-five years after the World Sikaran-Arnis Brotherhood of the Philippines was founded, sikaran has taken roots in Canada, the United States, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Germany, and Qatar.

"Before there was no association," remembers Geronimo, "we just played and played. Actually, It was the secret of the old folks. They would not teach the martial art because they were afraid of teaching the wrong person. That was the attitude of my father." In time, however, Cipriano agreed to teach his son who also observed him practicing arnis one day. "You see," explains Meliton, "the arnis of sikaran is the translation of the stick movements adopted to the forearm and hand in blocking. That is why we are good at blocking. The arnis stick is the extension of sikaran. My arnis was born through my mastery of sikaran."

The Pioneer of Sikaran

Meliton C. Geronimo was born on March 10, 1927, in Baras, Philippines. He inherited the art of sikaran from his father, Cipriano Geronimo. It is the efforts of Meliton and his students that are responsible for the emergence

and worldwide acceptance of this Filipino martial art. In 1957, Meliton joined the Philippine Air Force. It was his military career that enabled him to promote sikaran around the world through being stationed in different countries and entering various Asian martial arts tournaments.

"I was in Philippine Air Force studying at the U.S. Air Force base in Austin, Texas. I also spent time in Amarillo, Texas," recalls Geronimo. "I went to Japan for one year to enter competition. The Japanese government spent lots of money for the reformation of the Philippines. The air force represented the Philippine government to give us aircraft and money. I was one of the representatives of the air force to get the aircraft in Japan, where I stayed for one year and eight months." Meliton recalls that after hours often found the enlisted men playing karate and judo. They used to edge him on to join them. "I played with them," recounts Geronimo. "But when they saw that I knew how fight they asked me what my style was. I told them sikaran. But, I did not use the hand technique, only the foot. I told them that I wanted to learn their technique first before they learned my technique. In 1958 I returned home and formed the Sikaran-Arnis Brotherhood."

Although the Sikaran-Arnis Brotherhood was founded in 1958, Geronimo was the president of the Karate Brotherhood of the Philippines (KBP)—the largest federation in the country—since the early 1950s. In 1952, while still a lieutenant in the Philippine Air Force, Geronimo started to train in jujutsu under Pedro Garcia Sensei and Dionisio Aquino Sensei. When the Philippine Amateur Judo Association was established in 1953 he continued his training in judo under Francisco Solomon and Lieutenant Burgher of the U.S. Army.

In 1958, Geronimo shifted to karate and trained under a Japanese engineer named Koichi Kondo, and a Philippine Air Force Captain named Domingo Polotan. Both men were members of the All-Japanese Karate Association. That same year Geronimo established the Blue Diamond Karate Club at Nichols Air Base, with over 200 members. Within a year this club became the nucleus for the Karate Brotherhood of the Philippines.

In 1964, Geronimo headed the Philippine Karate team to compete in the First Asian Karate Tournament held in Tokyo and Utsonomiya City, Japan. It was here, during a field tournament, that Meliton was promoted to 3rd Dan by Kobayashi Fusakichi Sensei, president of the All-Japan Karate Association (AJKA). The Philippine team competitors in the middleweight category received a letter of citation for the "best technique and best fighting ability" from the AJKA.

In 1965, Geronimo again headed the Philippine delegation to the Second Asian Karate Tournament sponsored by the Korean Soo Bahk Do Association. The Philippine team took second place in the general standing. In

individual standings, Bernardo Bellesa took the heavyweight championship, Emilio Galisinao the middleweight championship, and Eduardo Miraflor the lightweight runner-up. Sikaran was quickly gaining ground as one of the most respected arts competing in these Asian tournaments.

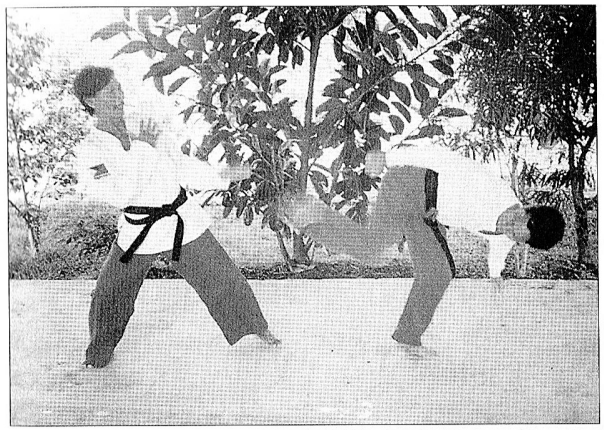
Though he started out with the AJKA, Geronimo later adopted the Korean styles of martial arts. In 1964, after an examination conducted by Dr. Byong Yu and Master Hwang Kee, president and vice-president, respectively, of the Korean Soo Bahk Do Association, Geronimo was promoted to 4th Dan in the organization.

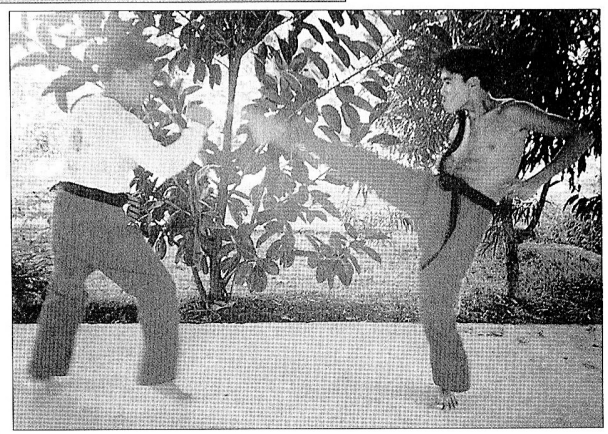
Geronimo's Karate Brotherhood of the Philippines had begun with only a half dozen member clubs, but had grown by 1965 into a federation of over forty affiliated clubs representing eight provinces of the Philippines. The Karate Brotherhood of the Philippines then had the distinct honor of hosting the Third Asian Karate Tournament in 1966.

A Tournament Tested Art

By virtue of its structure and techniques, sikaran has beaten many of the major styles of Japanese, Okinawan, Korean, and Chinese martial arts that have entered tournament competition. In explaining why sikaran is so successful, Geronimo merely states that it is their mastery over the kicking techniques which enables them to beat other styles. "If you practice the hand technique," explains Geronimo, "you will forget about the foot; if you practice the foot techniques you forget about the hand. Therefore, we use our hands and arms only for blocking." Although they do not favor hand techniques, the sikaran exponent does not totally dismiss the necessity of using the hand for an offensive weapon when one is not in a position to strike an opening with their foot.

Sikaran is set apart from the mainstream of kicking arts by its application of technique. "Taekwondo is now getting my style," asserts Geronimo, "especially the *biakid* (spinning hook kick). They did not have the *biakid* originally until we competed in Korea in 1957. The karate group that invited me was a contact group not a control group. Sikaran, as well, is a contact style, that's the difference there." The sikaran group was the first to represent the Philippines in international competition through the armed forces. To be accepted into the competitions they called themselves the Karate Brotherhood but were, in fact, never a karate style. That is why the Kapatiran Sikaran used to be called the Karate Brotherhood of the Philippines. Because of their success in competition they were invited to join the Asian Karate Organization which were responsible for promoting them Geronimo and his members to higher ranks. The tradition of sikaran never used a ranking structure other than the ruling of the *hari* of the circle fight.





Geronimo decided to align himself with various Japanese and Korean organizations in an effort to establish sikaran and have it accepted by the world martial arts community. In 1961, while In Korea, Hwang Kee, Byong Yu, Koichi Kondo, and Meliton Geronimo organized the first Asian Karate Association. It was through these organization that Geronimo was eventually promoted, in 1966, to the rank of 10th Dan and grandmaster of sikaran. Although in the 1950s and 1960s sikaran was not recognized and had to fall under the guise of a karate organization, it is now fully recognized and carries the proud banner of the Sikaran-Arnis Brotherhood of the Philippines. Under Geronimo's supervision, the Philippine Team introduced sikaran at all six of the Asian Karate Tournaments. The Philippine contingents to these titles received awards for being the "Best Fighting Teams." Geronimo was further cited as introducing into the world a new style of an ancient art in the light of the modern sport of sikaran.

Sikaran has been "tested" in the most important Asian martial arts tournaments. In fact, where many masters do not compete, Geronimo won as the individual champion during the First Asian Karate Tournament in 1964. Thereafter, he headed, coached, and became the Chief Instructor of the Philippine Teams that participated in the succeeding Asian Karate Tournaments. The efforts of this man cannot be contested, nor can the efforts of father Cipriano and his son, Milton, who now holds the rank of 4th Dan. Although sikaran, the Filipino art of foot-fighting, has not had much media coverage, it has proven itself inside and outside of the competition ring around the world. Not many esoteric, native arts of farmers can make a similar claim.

15

Leo M. Giron

Giron Arnis/Escrima

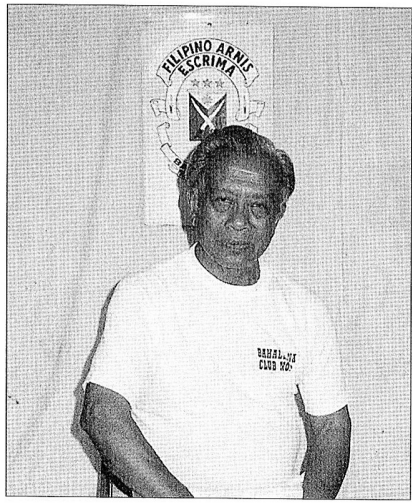
Peace is not without conflict;
It is the ability to cope with conflict.
—L. M. GIRON

Introduction

Three names are synonymous with the emergence of Filipino martial arts in the United States: Angel Cabales, Ben Largusa, and Leo Giron. Giron is a quiet man of eighty-five years, who lives a humble life in Stockton, California. His club is located on the lower level of his home, where inside one finds a number of banners, awards, and an array of philosophical quotes decorating its walls. And while this man has remained somewhat of an obscure figure in the Filipino martial arts community, instructors from all over the country have traveled to his home to receive his private tutoring. Notably, his system has been adopted by a number of jeet kune do instructors as their preferred system of weaponry. In *The Filipino Martial Arts,* Dan Inosanto wrote: "Grandmaster Giron is the 'unsung' practitioner of the Filipino stick and blade. His notoriety as a Filipino martial arts instructor is long overdue." It is hoped that this chapter will give him just that.

Acquiring His Craft

Leovigildo "Leo" M. Giron was born on August 20, 1911, in Bayambang, Pangasinan, Philippines. "In my barrio," recalls Giron, "the kids are mean and even in town we have to learn a little self-defense. If you don't they will take advantage of you. Once you hit one and he starts crying, all the

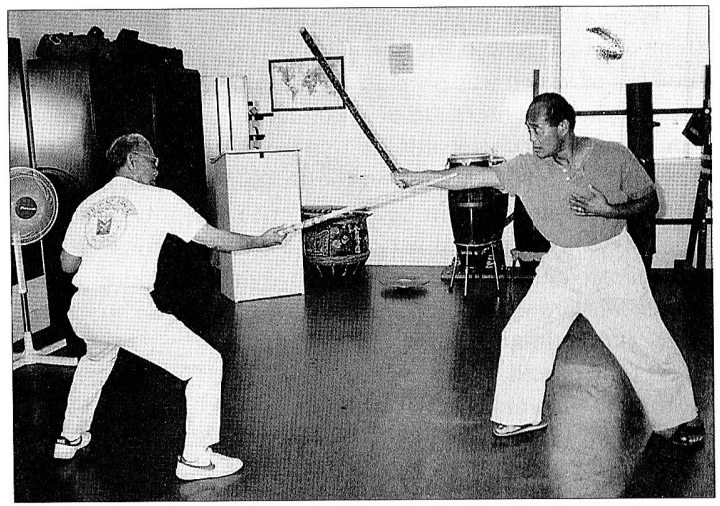


Grandmaster Leo M. Giron

rest will run away. The first thing you have to learn is who gets there first will win." To assure that it was his strike which landed first, Giron took up the practice of escrima in 1922, at the age of ten years.

Giron's early training began with three individuals in Pangasinan. His first escrima instructor was Benito Junio, an accomplished fighter in the kabaroan (new or long range) style. Training sessions were held at night beneath a large mango tree which decorated the lawn of Giron's Parent's home. In exchange for using their property on which to teach, Junio allowed the neighborhood children to attend the practice. "Master Junio decided that maybe it is good for kids to learn," recalls Giron. "So we pay [with] bundles of rice, not money, for one year's training. The teacher will be practicing with the students and you can hear the clattering of the sticks. Sometimes students will start hollering when they get hit." Giron recalls that although Benito was always drunk, he was a good fighter, and training under him lasted approximately one year.

Giron then had the privilege of studying under his cousin, Julian Bundoc, a graduate student of Benito's, and master of the kadaanan (old or close range) style. His third instructor was Fructuso Junio (Benito's uncle). Fructuso was a master of the Macabebe double-sticks style, known as sinawali. "In Bayambang where I trained with Fructuso Junio," recalls Giron, "I was told not to talk about Benito or Julian anymore because Fructuso is now my teacher and I already finished [my lessons] with the others." This sentiment seems to be a constant among instructors during that time. The fact that Giron was accepted as a student under more than one instructor during the 1920s, is a testament to his character.



While attending the local school in town Leo became acquainted with some of the tough kids. When the kids began "playing around" with Giron he simply returned the favor. As a result of his escrima training, Leo was soon considered one of the in-crowd. Leo went to school through the seventh grade but had to quit at the age of fifteen because he had to go to work. His cousin then convinced him to go to the United States as they had an uncle who lived there. "I had a choice," acknowledges Giron: "Go to America or follow the plow. I don't want to follow the plow, I was short at that time. Then that's it, I came to United States." Like other Filipinos who relocated to the United States, Giron did so by way of boat. He traveled on the *President Lincoln* and docked in San Francisco on November 17, 1926. Soon thereafter he relocated to Stockton, California, and took work cutting celery and asparagus for seventeen and a half cents an hour. The hourly wage of the time was thirty-five cents an hour.

It was while working as the bookkeeper in a prune orchard in Meridian, California, in 1929, that Giron met his fourth instructor, Flaviano Vergara. Vergara was a master of escrima and arnis, and learned these arts from Dalmacio Bergonia—the only person to have defeated the legendary fighter, Santiago Toledo. (It is said that Bergonia could not have defeated Toledo in his prime).

Vergara's influence upon Giron's understanding and style of play is significant, as he was able to articulate the relationship between the defensive concepts of kadaanan and the fluidity and range of kabaroan. It was he who advised that it would be up to the student after graduation to fill in the gaps between the two styles.

"We played far away from the camp since Flaviano would not teach in front of other people," recalls Giron. Vergara was critical of three things, the First of which was proper foot placement. "Vergara was very critical of where I placed my feet. An over indulgent and aggressive right-hand fighter can, if he lacks control, cut his own leg if he persists in placing his left foot forward." Second, was the virtue of patience and observation. "Vergara always told me never to be too eager to win a bout before I was certain what style my opponent was playing. Then you must choose the appropriate defense against your opponent's style." The third and most important advice Vergara shared with Giron was to always be humble with his knowledge, and maintain a quiet disposition.

As time passed, many of the farm workers transferred to other fields for work. Flaviano and Leo were separated and did not see each other again for another thirty years.

The Master's Fan

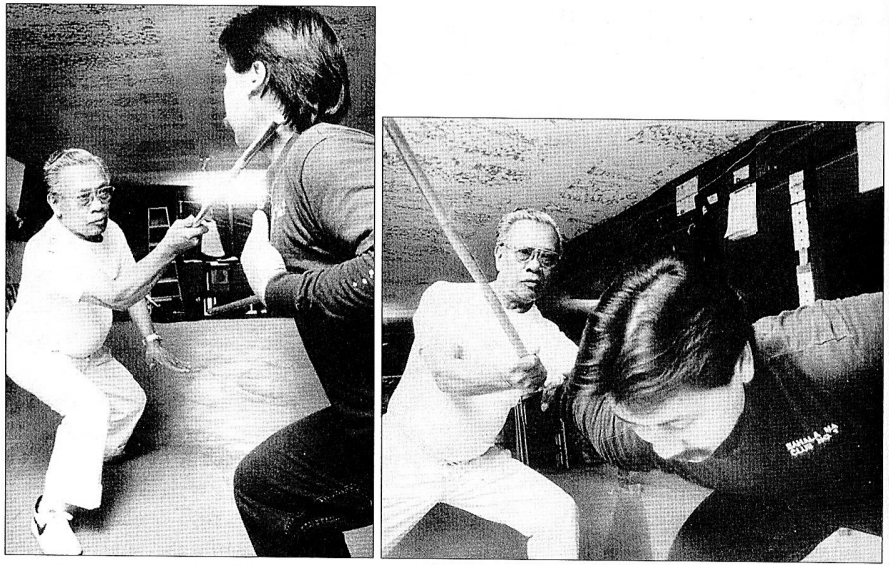
In October 1942, Giron enlisted in the United States Army. At the onset of World War II, he was shipped to Fort Ord, California. It was during Thanksgiving that Giron was reunited with his old friend and teacher, Flaviano Vergara. They trained for a few hours every day, practicing old skills and new. Toward the end of their time together, Vergara asked Giron: "Do you remember what I told you about the two extremes of your art? The base is kadaanan, a close-quarter combat style, while the kabaroan uses distance and is the safer of the two. Suppose someone presented you with a style that is neither kadaanan nor kabaroan what would you do? You must fill in the gap between your two styles." Flaviano then proceeded to take a sheet of paper and fold it into a crude-looking fan. Pointing to its left-end Flaviano said, "This is your old style (kadaanan)." Next, he pointed to the right side and said, "This is your new style (kabaroan). The spaces in the middle are the secrets of the master. I now entrust them to you as a remembrance of me." This was the beginning of Giron's quest to complete the *abaniko del maestro* (fan of the master) the twenty styles that constitutes Giron arnis/escrima.

During his time of quest, Giron developed the *de fondo* style, an expansion of the kadaanan style he learned from Benito Junio. The *de fondo* style consists of twelve striking areas and 144 defensive movements. Each of the strikes and movements dictate the type of footwork needed to facilitate the effective execution of the respective movements. According to Giron's philosophy, the twelve striking areas in *de fondo* are symbolic of the twelve pairs of ribs on the human body. Conversely, the *larga mano* style (kabaroan) has eight strikes. In his teaching, however, Giron eliminated the three which

Giron holding the "masters fan"

repeated themselves and now utilizes the *cinco tero,* or five strikes. "The *cinco tero* are sufficient in real combat" asserts Giron. "*Larga mano* techniques are the easiest to learn and are very effective because of the stretching ability, the distance, and the long weapon. So, if you mix kadaanan (old style) and kabaroan (new style) you can feel safe if you think you are going to be engaged in a fight. Depending on the terrain, you may have to use both." In the months to come, Giron had to employ both of these styles while fighting in the jungles of the Philippines.

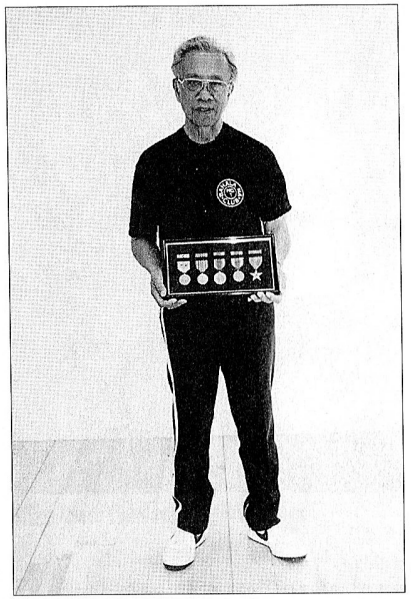
Each of the twenty styles represent different methods or concepts of offensive and defensive movement application. While Grandmaster Giron asserts that the *de fondo* and the *larga mano* styles are the most critical, the eighteen in the center are the link between them. The twenty "styles" of techniques include *estilo de fondo* (anchored in position style), *estilo de abanico* (fan style), *estilo abierta* (open body style), *estilo de salon* (stomping and dancing style), *estilo sunkite* (thrusting style), *estilo riterada* (retreating style), *estilo elastico* (stretching style), *fondo fuerte* (planting in a solid position style), *contra compas* (probing style), *estilo redondo* (circular motion style), *combate adentro* (in-fighting style), *tero grave* (killing strikes style), *estilo* Macabebe (double-sticks style), *tero pisada* (heavy striking system), *media media* (feinting and half-beat striking style), *cadena de mano* (hand-to-hand and disarming), *escapo* (escaping or left hand parrying style), *estilo bolante* (vertical striking style), *mizcla contras* (multiple opponent defensive style), and *estilo larga mano* (long-hand or reaching style).



Giron demonstrating on senior student Tony Somera

In reference to the twenty styles, Giron states: "Some of them are old combat techniques and some are newer and for self-defense. You notice that on the left side is the *de fondo* and on the extreme right is the *larga mano*. The techniques in the middle are the subsidiary techniques for self-defense only. A master has to have at least a feel for them but doesn't [necessarily] have to teach them in a club." Giron only considers teaching the eighteen subsidiary styles to those students who have already graduated from his club with a degree of skill in *de fondo* and *larga mano*. Once a student has perfected the *de fondo* and *larga mano* styles are they given the privilege of remaining with the club for further instruction in the supplementary styles.

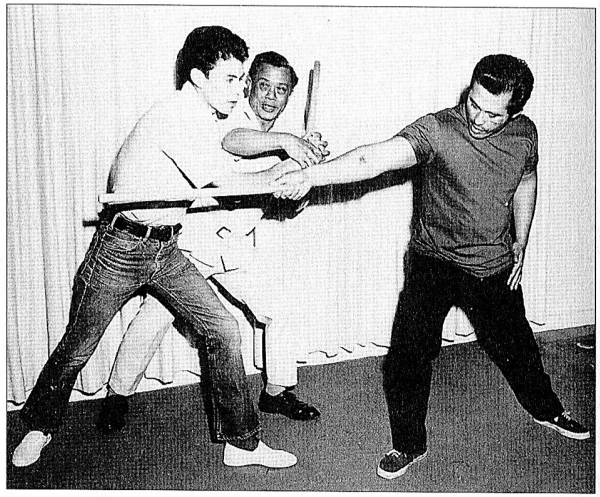
In July 1943, Giron and Vergara were again separated as Giron was sent to Camp Kholer. After being given an aptitude test his rank was upgraded to Buck Sergeant. Giron and fourteen others were then sent to New Guinea for a month of advanced training in secret landings, communication, and reconnaissance. The fifteen of them were then shipped to Australia and on to the Philippines in 1944. "The mountains in the Philippines are bare, hot and high," recalls Giron. "I was thirty-one, in my prime, and could hike all day and not know how to get tired. We were discovered by the Japanese during the disembarkation. We killed twenty-three of them, we were fifteen. You have to kill them so nobody survives and talks. I chopped a guy



Giron holding his medals from WWII

in the throat with my *bolo* and the blood squirted on me. It tasted kind of salty. This fighting business, if you continue to engage in it, you get brave and it becomes routine—you wash the blood from your hands and grab your food and eat and walk around. You don't give it a second thought."

The military fighting style of the Japanese was carried out in three stages: first with rifle, then bayonet, then *katana* (sword). During a bonsai charge the Japanese would cut down and across with their sword. "You develop a style without a style—chop, chop, chop," motions Giron. "One time I got clipped with a bayonet. I blocked the samurai sword coming down toward my shoulder, and a rifle bayonet went by my side from another Japanese soldier. I cut the hip of the bayonet thruster and then the triceps of the one with the sword. After that I just keep charging and fighting the next ones. Its up to the guys behind me to finish the job because there are too many more coming." While reflecting on his experience, Giron notes that during these sudden charges and the ensuing hand-to-hand combat he was never nervous or scared. However, when the fighting was momentarily over and "everything is quiet except for some people moaning," he would find himself off to the side shaking. "I am not afraid during the encounter," he states. "I am brave and I know what I am doing. I was young and had a lot of energy and good eye sight. But afterward I feel like melting." On December 25, 1945 Leo Giron was honorably discharged from the United States Army and returned to his home in California.



Inspired to Teach

Upon returning home from the war, Giron shied away from violence. He stopped practicing escrima and never made much mention of it to others. It wasn't until the late 1960s, when a number of nursing students were killed in Chicago, that Giron changed his mind. "There were several Filipinas in that group" recalls Giron. "If they had only used their head and ganged up on the killer they would have been able to stop him. So I decided to help people learn a little self-defense. Even if they are not good at fighting I would stimulate their interest in surviving and maybe they can use their *cabesa* (head). Yet these girls were frozen by fear, paralyzed."

In 1966, Angel Cabales, Max Sarmiento, Leo Giron, and Dentoy Revillar were organizing plans to open a large public escrima academy in Stockton. It was agreed that Cabales would be the head of the academy and teach Cabales serrada escrima (close range), Giron would teach Giron arnis/escrima (long range), and Sarmiento would teach cadena de mano (empty hands). As a student of each of these masters, Dentoy Revillar would be the substitute instructor. Although this arrangement was initially acceptable, Giron decided in 1967 to open his own club in Tracy, California. That year he also married to his wife, Alberta, who was in support of his opening a club. "I asked Cabales if my school could be club number two since I now had six students," recalls Giron. "He said six students was not enough for him to come to Tracy and teach. I didn't want him to teach my students since our styles were different. The club was already existing and just I wanted to come under Cabales' supervision for the government of the academy. He

Giron training Dan Inosanto, circa 1968

said no, and that it had to be serrada or nothing. I told him never mind I'll go by myself."

In deciding on a name for his club Leo Giron reflected on his days in the military. "When I was in the army I belonged to the Allied Intelligence Bureau," he states, "and they organized the first Filipino reconnaissance battalion. There were three groups in that battalion, reconnaissance, signal, and demolition. I was in charge of the signal crew. The slogan of that battalion was *bahala na* ("come what may"). So, in 1968, I adopted it for the club's slogan." The Bahala Na Club didn't begin gaining popularity until Giron began teaching Dan Inosanto.

At a wedding, Dan's mother asked Leo if her son could learn real escrima. Leo asked her what she meant by "real," and she replied that it implied an art that is hard to beat. "I know in my mind," asserts Giron, "that it has got to be *larga mano*. I won't say that there are no other effective techniques or styles, but I still stay with my *larga mano* style. I know it works because of the distance. If you know how to use the distance and how to stretch and retrieve your body backward, you will be ahead all of the time." In 1968, Giron vacationed in Culver City, California. Dan Inosanto and Richard Bustillo would pick him up every night for escrima lessons. "After two months of every night they got good," states the Grandmaster. "You know, *larga mano* is not that hard of a style to learn. Then once in a while I show them the *de fondo* style which is very similar in many respects with serrada escrima because of its common blocking system that we call kadaanan in the Philippines. We stuck with kadaanan for a while until I decided to

change some of the movements of kadaanan and created the *de fondo* style—that's the major style that we are playing now." In 1970, Inosanto, Bustillo, Ted Lucay Lucay, and Jerry Poteet received their instructor's diploma from Giron. Since then, Giron has been a regular seminar instructor at their respective academies.

Elements and Seasons

Leo Giron has established an underlying philosophy of life and training which is symbolized by a four-leaf clover. The four leaves on a clover represent the four seasons in a year and the four elements Giron feels are essential to life. According to Giron: "The system of the four leaf clover grew out of a vase. Life thrives out of this vase, the vase of life, the home and union of the four elements. These elements include: earth, out of which has been molded the frame of the body; air, the breath of life which blows through the nostrils of man; heat, which was provided so the body will not freeze; and water, so that the body will not dehydrate."

The Giron system of arnis/escrima, which is comprised of the twenty aforementioned styles, is structured around the concept of how things occur in daily life. For example, the change of seasons suggest a progression which is also seen in the escrima student as he progresses from one technical level to another. As the seasons change in their own time, so proficiency in escrima cannot be rushed. As the seasons gradually pass from one to another and then return full circle to the beginning, so the student's knowledge and skills gradually progress from natural roughness to unnatural sharpness and finally return to natural movement with sharp technique.

Grandmaster Leo M. Giron concludes by offering these words of advise to all practitioners of the art: "Do not rush to be the champion. Knowing how to go by the system of self-defense, and practicing constantly, might in the future put the champion's belt around you. Let us establish in our minds that we learn the art of escrima for self-preservation. In simple words, we learn the art to defend ourselves from destruction by our fellow human beings that have nothing better to do than seek to inflict injury upon other people."

16

Antonio Ilustrisimo

Kali Ilustrisimo

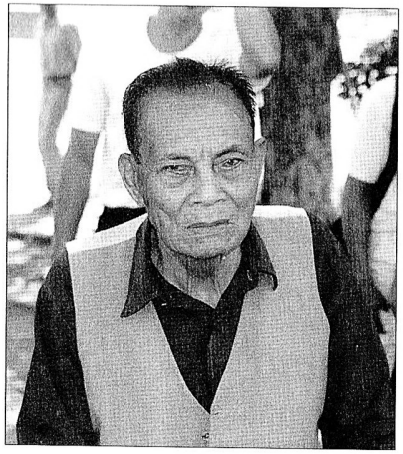
I do not specialize nor favor any combat range.
Everything depends on my opponent and
the development and evolution of the fight.
—A. ILUSTRISIMO

Introduction

Antonio Ilustrisimo was born on Kinatarcan Island, Santa Fe (now known as Bagong Batayan), in 1904. He began learning the art of eskrima at the age of seven under his father, Isidro Ilustrisimo and his uncle, Melecio Ilustrisimo. Among Ilustrisimo's earliest recollections is his "calling" to go to America. By the age of nine years, he was determined to do just that. Along the way, Ilustrisimo encountered martial arts masters from around the world and fought in more "death-matches" than perhaps any other Filipino martial arts master. Ilustrisimo is among the most respected and feared kali masters that the art has ever known—as indicated by his nickname, "Tatang," a Tagalog term of respect. After meeting and engaging Tatang Ilustrisimo in *laro-laro* (give and take) stick and staff sparring practices in Manila, I stand in awe of his ability as he effortlessly out performed me. This is even more impressive considering that he was eighty-seven years old at the time. The following account is a brief glimpse into the life of this revered warrior.

In Search of a Dream

"When I was nine years [old] I can see the ships passing by" recalls Tatang. "I thought to myself that in a couple of days I am going to America." The



Grandmaster Antonio Ilustrisimo

next day Ilustrisimo asked his father if he could go aboard one of the ships and look around. His father agreed but with the stipulation that he come home early as he had to wake up at four o'clock the next morning to work on the farm. "When I arrived at the bay," continues Ilustrisimo, "I am looking for the *sakayan* (docking area) for *banka* (small fishing boats) which will load only one or two people. Then I get a young coconut, cut it into about five pieces and put it in the boat." Ilustrisimo stole the boat and began sailing into the open sea. As he rowed, Kinatarcan slowly disappeared into the horizon. He believed that he was on his way to America. After some time he came across a group of fisherman who were surprised to see such a small boy in a boat by himself. They asked what he was doing. "Going to America!" claimed Ilustrisimo. Upon hearing this the fisherman broke into laughter. The captain, sensing the boy's sincerity, determination and naiveté, told him that, although he had quite a way to go, if he kept in his current direction America would soon appear. The captain then gave him some fish to take with him on his journey.

A few days passed and Ilustrisimo came upon an island. Although it was Cebu and not America, Ilustrisimo knew that since the ships docked there were large they must be bound for America. He then stowed away on the *Pompei,* and after the ship had long departed he came out of hiding. Since Ilustrisimo was by himself he was immediately confronted by the crew who asked what his intentions were. He replied, "I am going to America, like you." The crew laughed at him and went their own way leaving a confused Ilustrisimo to his own resources.

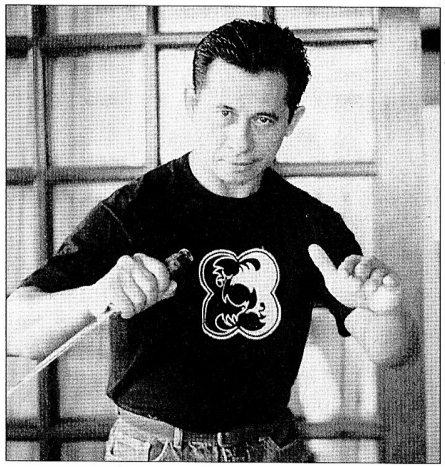
"I arrived in Zamboanga City, Mindanao," states Ilustrisimo. "I thought it was America. I go down and look around and thought Americans don't talk English but are Moros. So, I said, 'Hey, Mr. Muslim, where are you

Ilustrisimo in Moro warrior garb with *kris*

going?' He said he was going back to Jolo (Sulu Archipelago). I took a ride with him. When I arrived in Jolo one of the *hadji* (wealthy men) named Muhammed invited me to stay in his house for a while." Life in Jolo presented a new beginning for Ilustrisimo. He was introduced to and became the favorite adopted son of the ruler of Jolo, Sultan Muhammed. As such, he was converted from Catholicism to the Muslim faith and re-named Mon Tisali. For the next six years Ilustrisimo lived with the Sultan and his two sons, went to school dressed like a prince complete with a gold-handled *barong,* and learned their language. While in Jolo he also trained daily in the art of kali under Master Pedro Cortes. Under Cortes, Ilustrisimo learned a number of fighting techniques, including *cadena real, combate general,* and *media friale* (discussed later). A favorite technique that he learned was to disarm a knife with a mere handkerchief.

The Unbeatable Master

"When I was fifteen I went to the store because one of my friend he knew where to buy beer," recalls Ilustrisimo. "When I arrived in the store I asked how much and the woman said twenty-five cents each. I asked for five–three for me and two for my friend. Then one man said 'When you buy beer do not talk so much.' I replied, 'How can I buy if I do not talk.' Then he

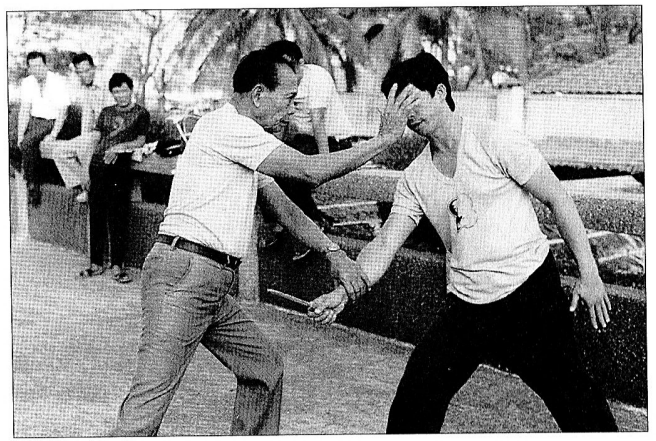


Tony Diego in knife-fighting posture

took his *barong* and strikes [at] me but I beat him [to the strike]. His head is cut [off] by me and the body run away. It did not go down right away and the blood was still running everywhere. His eyes where intense and staring at me from his head on the ground, so I thought maybe he has *anting-anting.*"

As a result of this encounter, the police arrested Ilustrisimo and sent him to jail. He was soon released since the killing was in self-defense, but was consequently deported from the island. While on board the departing ship, Ilustrisimo asked the radio operator to dial his father and tell him to meet his son in Cebu. "I saw my father looking for me but he didn't recognize me, so I let him pass by a few times. Then I asked him why he is passing back and forth and he said that he was looking for his son. I said, 'Father it is me! You don't recognize me but I am your son.' We went down to the house to meet my mother. She didn't recognize me either. Then we hugged. I said okay I have only half of the money to return that I took from you when I left. They didn't care because they thought I had died. I told them I am going to America but will return again. "

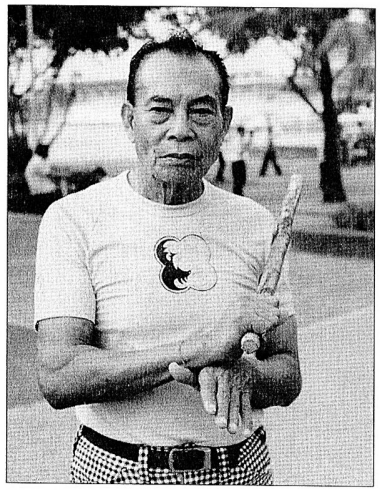
Ilustrisimo then caught a ship to Manila where he currently resides. While in Manila, Ilustrisimo met and became close friends with his cousin, Floro Villabrille, as well as Jose Mena, Felicisimo Dizon, and Angel Cabales. "We would all practice together and go back to the north harbor to practice. Then we went to Lara, where there is a mine where many people work, because there is a big man there who had killed six men already. My cousin, Floro, was there gambling with him and winning. We tried to stop him from playing and when he did the killer got angry and took his knife out. I am the one who stopped them from fighting." Later that evening, Ilustrisimo



and his fellow *eskrimadors* went to a dance with their girlfriends. "At around nine o'clock that man approached me and said that he wanted my life. He pulled out the dagger and thrust it at me three times which I parried all of them. Then I disarm and I stabbed him." Early the next morning the police caught Ilustrisimo going to Bambulao where his uncle lived. He had to return to Manila, where he applied for overseas work in America, while awaiting another hearing.

One of my friends was there when I kill the man," continues Ilustrisimo. "He wants to kill a man who cheated him but he is a boxer and doesn't know knife fighting. He asked me everyday on what is a good idea that he can kill a man. He punched the man many times but it didn't work. I said I would do it for him. My *compadres* said that [the man over there] was the one who is responsible. [In the interest of fairness] I said to give him a knife when he arrive at the gate, but my weapon is in my arm sleeve. When I arrived at the gate he [immediately] struck at me with his knife, which was then gone. I disarmed him. Then I cut him in the neck three times with my knife. Then my *compadres* take the knife away and drink the blood of the guy [to get his spirit and courage] and told me to get away. I left and about fifty feet down the road I met the police. I confessed and we went back to the scene of the crime where my *compadres* were still drinking the man's blood. People protected me because the dead man was a trouble-maker and they are every happy that he is dead. I had seventeen arrests [during] that time."

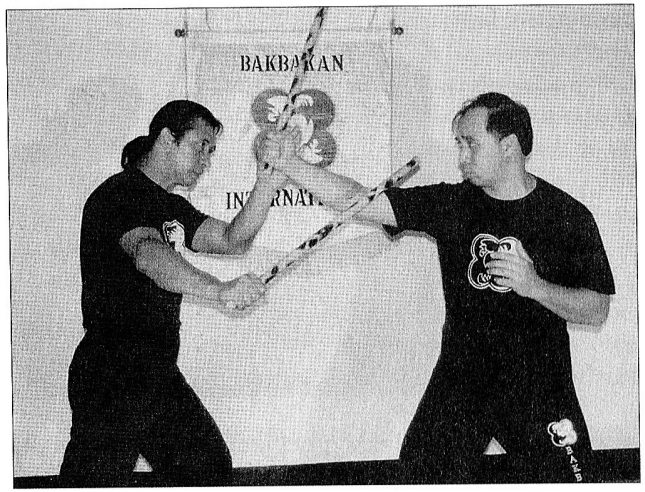
In earnestly offering and accepting every challenge that came his way, Ilustrisimo traveled to Negros Occidental (Visayan Islands) to fight an *eskrimador* from Bacolod. "I fought in Sagay, Negros Occidental at one of their fiestas," states Tatang. "I defeated Pedro Sandoval. On another occa-



sion in Negros, I fought and defeated Rufino Reyes of Manapla. I also defeated the natives who came to challenge me. I was also once attacked by three men who's leader was notorious for having killed a police officer. This man had two cohorts who attempted to distract me by throwing stones at me while he rushed toward me with a drawn *bolo*. I had a very sharp *barong* with me and as he attacked I countered his strike by cutting off his thumb. The three men then all ran off."

In 1950, Ilustrisimo's application was accepted to work as a merchant marine aboard a ship that was bound for America. He traveled to many ports around the world including New York, Paris, Brazil, India, and Indonesia. He would contract for one or two years and then return to the Philippines for an equal length of time.

While in Calcutta, Grandmaster Ilustrisimo received an invitation to go to Singapore to fight in a special bout against a pencak-silat master from Djakarta, Indonesia. Upon hearing that this man was a seasoned master who enjoyed to fight, Ilustrisimo ran and trained diligently every day. Upon his arrival in Singapore Ilustrisimo saw a sign for the bout that read: "Antonio Ilustrisimo has come from the Philippines and is the man who cannot be killed." Five-thousand spectators filled the Happy World Stadium to see the much anticipated match which pitted kali against silat. Upon entering the ring, the pencak-silat master immediately attacked Ilustrisimo with his sword. Moving slightly off of the attacking angle, Ilustrisimo severely cut the man's arm, thus ending the bout. The Indonesian was unable to continue and admitted defeat. He was later to approach Ilustrisimo with an offer of $1,500 dollars a month and all of the women he wanted in

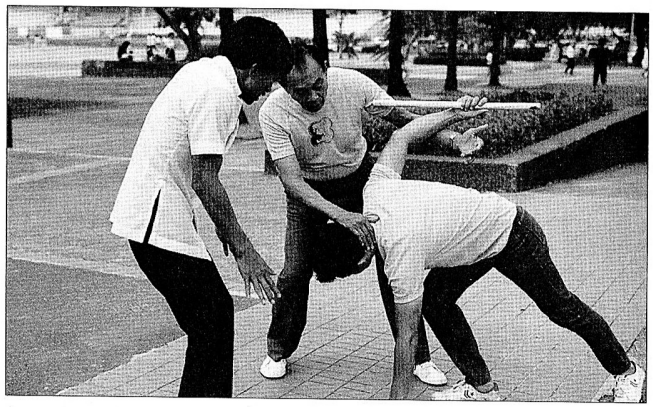


return for being accepted as a private pupil. Since Ilustrisimo had finally secured a full-time job aboard a merchant vessel he declined the offer.

It wasn't until World War II, however, that Tatang was able to use his finely honed skills in the defense of his own country. "I was a guerrilla fighter with Marcus Villa Agustin in Sierra Madre, Luzon," Ilustrisimo proudly acknowledges. "I was the *berdugo* (executioner) of Japanese spies. We would fight the Japanese with their own rifles which we got from ambushing their convoys. We would even wear their uniforms to sneak into their garrisons. We used [either] our *bolos* or knives in close quarters hand-to-hand fights with the Japanese soldiers. We trained well in the *saksakan* (knife fighting techniques) in the mountains and easily defeated and killed [often beheading] the Japanese spies."

Fighting Tactics and Strategy

Kali Ilustrisimo is comprised of eskrima techniques from the Visayas and kali techniques from the Sulu Archipelago. It features training in the use of single and double sticks, single and double swords, sword and dagger, staff, handkerchief and empty-hands. As a system it is composed of different "styles" of techniques such as *estrella bartical* (vertical block and parry), *florete* (circular thrust), *boca y lobo* (overhead parry and strike), Batangueño *serrada* (Batangas technique), *de cadena* (chained strikes), *media fraile* (central vertical parry) and *warwok* (return to sender). Among Ilustrisimo's favorite techniques are *pluma* (named after the motion made by a brush-pen) and *cruzada* (cross-shaped movements). It must be noted, however,



that the techniques are not the secret to kali Ilustrisimo. It is the fighting concepts of *enganyo* (feinting maneuvers), *prakcion* (a corruption of the word fraction—of a beat), *cadena real* (linking of principal techniques), *reloj de arena* (hourglass shape), and *dakip-diwa* (spontaneous action without consciousness) which distinguish the application of this art from others.

Of the techniques found within the system, attacking methods are considered to be the most important. Given Grandmaster Ilustrisimo's background one can certainly appreciate why. According to Ray Galang, one of the art's senior instructors, "We either take the offensive or *enganyo* (bait) our opponents into committing the first move. We then launch our strikes. *Prakcion* are strikes to attacks without any prerequisite blocking techniques. These are the most direct, practical and efficient defensive or retaliation that one can execute. Your counter is a half-beat (i.e., a fraction) faster than your opponent's attack and therefore does not need a block to stop an attack. Rather, you make use of the created opening in the opponent's position to your advantage. The opponent's attack supplies the opportunity or opening. You simply observe the attack of the opponent and counter directly." Based on his application of these principles in *patayan* "death matches," Ilustrisimo has no preference as to where he strikes an opponent's body. Openings can present themselves in any form, such as an extended hand, or an opponent's head.

The practitioners of kali Ilustrisimo diligently train all known variations of their movements until such a time as they are executed automatically in free sparring sessions. Any change in an opponent's attack or defense will then automatically be identified by the exponent of this art who, in the moment, evaluates, modifies, and reacts automatically to the new "threat" with proven and tested tactics. The possible changes of angles and positions an opponent could take have been classified in kali Ilustrisimo as the

reloj de arena pattern. The horizontal and vertical lines found in the hourglass shape represent all possible changes in angles of an oncoming attack. In addition, any shift will cause enough displacement in the opponent's position, allowing the kali Ilustrisimo practitioner to evade the attack or parry. With each subtle change, a new opportunity is presented to the practitioner.

In addition to the various fighting techniques, training methods and conceptual fighting strategies, Ilustrisimo also believes in the power of *orasyon* and *anting-anting*. While many of his students do not believe in nor possess such "divine intervention" (as many contemporary practitioners of the Filipino martial arts do not), Ilustrisimo holds fast to them acknowledging their use during a number of his life-threatening challenge matches.

"I am Catholic now but I was also brought up Muslim," states Ilustrisimo. "I believe in *orasyon* and pray everyday at three o'clock and six o'clock, without fail. I also have *anting-anting*. You can not abuse this power or God will punish you. When I fight, I repeat the *orasyon* over and over in my mind during the fight and the enemy takes a loss. Sometimes I have dreams of fighting and [how] I will be protected." Interestingly, Grandmaster Ilustrisimo has an *orasyon* tattooed across his chest (*see* chap. 5). He claims that as a result of this people are more apt to be nice to him and not know why. He believes it to be the power of God.

Again, the possession of an *orasyon* or *anting-anting* must be inherited to be "effective." Prior to competing in a number of national arnis tournaments, Ilustrisimo gave to Miguel Zubiri (a kali Ilustrisimo student of Christopher Ricketts) an *anting-anting*. He was to chew on a bit of wood during the competition matches which had been prayed over by Ilustrisimo. Zubiri won all three of his matches.

As a final word, Grandmaster Antonio "Tatang" Ilustrisimo has this to say: "I consider fighting skills to be most important in my system. It is only during mortal combat that I reinforce my spirit and courage with my *orasyon* and my faith in God." Now at the age of ninety, Grandmaster Ilustrisimo is still found practicing and teaching his art on Sunday mornings at "the Luneta" (Rizal Park), across from the Manila Hotel. The future of kali Ilustrisimo rests in the capable hands of his protégé and legal heir, Master Antonio Diego and senior students, Masters Epifanio "Yuli" Romo, Christopher Ricketts, and Ray Galang.

17

Carlito Lañada

Kuntaw Lima-Lima

I am of course the organizer of Kuntaw
because nobody else did that.
But I do not claim the right
to all Kuntaw.
—C. A. LAÑADA

Introduction

Yoyong Hueño was said to be a well known expert of both kali and kuntaw. He lived in the Bicol region of Luzon, Philippines, and was the son of Amang Hueño of Mindanao. Yoyong died at the age of 107 but not before imparting his knowledge of the Filipino fighting arts to his son, Yong Iban Hueño. It was during the time of Spanish occupation in the Philippines that a decree was passed mandating that all Filipino families change their surnames to Spanish. Yong Iban Hueño became Yong Iban Lañada, the father of Carlito A. Lañada.

Grandmaster Carlito A. Lañada is the founder of kuntaw lima-lima, an art whose techniques are reminiscent of Okinawan Shorin-ryu and Shito-ryu karate styles, with underpinnings of Chinese kung-fu. Grandmaster Lañada is adamant about not placing Filipino kuntaw in the same category as Chinese or Indonesian kun-tao. In fact, as used here the term kuntaw is an acronym comprised of the root words *kunsegrado* and *hataw*. *Kunsegrado* is a misspelling of the Spanish words *con segrado* (with sacredness) and the Tagalog word *hataw* (to strike). Lima-lima, in Tagalog, refers to the number five. Therefore, the meaning of kuntaw lima-lima is the art of "five sacred strikes," and truly has no connection to Chinese or Indonesian kun-tao.

Grandmaster Carlito A. Lañada

An Interview with Carlito Lañada

MW : Grandmaster Lañada, how would you best describe Philippine kuntaw?

CL : Kuntaw is sometimes misinterpreted or misunderstood by people because there are many ways to spell this art. If you art talking about kuntaw spelled with a "w", that is where I am concerned. Kuntaw spelled kun-tao I also know about but do not have any authority to discuss.

Kuntaw is the art of Filipino hand and foot fighting which can be traced back as far as 1365. The art was so deadly that it was outlawed in 1849 when Governor Narcisco Claveria passed a decree that anybody caught practicing kuntaw would be prosecuted. He also inserted an addendum that all native Filipino families had to change their surname to Spanish. In kuntaw we use hard and soft ways. Speaking about soft, it means open-hand. When we say hard it means closed fist. Kuntaw uses both hard and soft, hand and foot, and even weapons for defense.

MW : Where, then, does the Filipino art of kuntaw originate?

CL : Some people spell kuntaw as "kun-tao". The way I understand it from the instruction my father gave to me is that "kuntaw" is proper. The way I understand it if you practice "kun-tao" then your art derives from Taoism, Confucian's time. It is different than "kuntaw." It is like the Filipino terms *araw,* which means sun, and *kalayaw,* which is like a carabao. We use the "w" in Filipino which is the only one I am concerned about. I organized this art in 1960. Then in 1970 Colonel Nacalos tried to merge all organizations that existed in the

Philippines into one. Most of these styles were borrowed or patterned after other countries.

MW : At what age did you begin your formal kuntaw training?

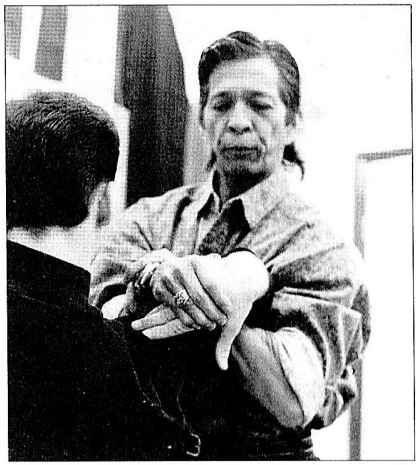
CL : Because my father was a commander of the guerrillas, there were many people under him. We practiced sometimes as a sport, sometimes just to stretch. About the age of nine or ten years I began to train. Back in the southern Philippines martial artists would gamble. They would place sacks of unrefined rice on top of one another and draw a circle on the ground. It was for personal needs only. If I came from this or that *barangay* (sparsely populated town), and I won, the rice was ours to keep. They call this *paligitan* (circle fight).

When I grew older I would go to other places to exchange ideas. There are some instructors that would meet me and I would tell them, 'You already have this kind of martial art. Can I see it because I, too, have my own?' Afterward he would consider me as his student. Sometimes I go to some place in Manila just to look at the similarities of the instructors. Suddenly they say my name, especially when I started teaching at the Philippine Air Force and Subic Naval Base. That is why in the Philippines I do not begrudge. They are all good. But they still have that crab mentality: when you are crawling to get somewhere they are going to pull you back.

MW : How often, then, did you train? Could you also share with us some of your training methods?

CL : There were so many ways. I didn't even know, sometimes. There were ways in which I was training and did not know it. My father would tell me to get some water. We lived not far from a lake. When I would return he would be disappointed, drop the bucket, scream, and send me back for more. It was sort of a physical training. Other times he would tell me to get some stones. I would then go and get some. It is not like today where you can call up and order a truck load of stones delivered. Before, I could only carry two to five stones at a time. Often he would tell me to return them. There were other times when my training was obvious. My father would tell me to go to him. We had no formal uniforms then, just short pants. He would then instruct me. Sometimes he would hit me and I would cry. He would then tell me I shouldn't cry and would teach me the correct methods of defense.

But, for us now, you train just to maintain your physical endurance once per day. If you want to be an expert you train three times per week. But like me, I am over age sixty, or even when you are forty, you should limit your practice. As you become older your stamina decreases. At the older ages it is experience that counts.



MW : Does your system of kuntaw stress the training of *sayaw* (forms)?

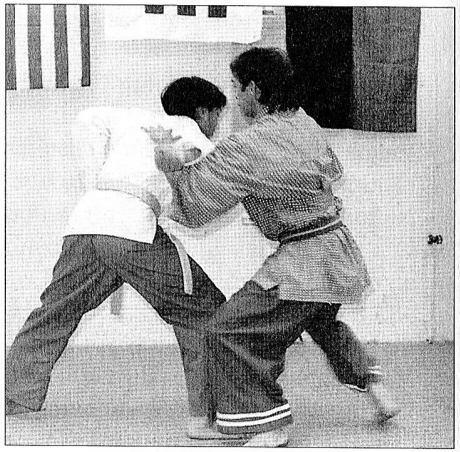
CL : Many people have won competitions with my *naga* form. Now people may not recognize the name. *Naga* is the place where I was born but I changed the name to *sagayan* which is a shifting action. *Sampaguita,* our form named after the Philippine national flower, is another. *Mayon,* one of the seven wonders of the world in the Philippines, is a name of another of our forms. We also have the *bulsinara* form in the advanced levels. Afterwards there are no more forms. We also have *balangkas* or basics which are based on the shapes of the figure-8 and letter X.

MW : The name of your style is kuntaw lima-lima. Could you explain its meaning?

CL : *Lima-lima* means five-five. Some other systems have twelve or seventeen strikes, we have five. In this art we have five disarms, five thrusts, five strikes, and five throwing techniques. Everything is in five. Even in empty hand we have five soft blocks and five hard blocks. It is easy to learn this way.

MW : What is the concept behind your principle of *agos* (flow)?

CL : Sometimes in arnis there are three categories to blocking. When somebody strikes you, you block to the hands. It means stopping the momentum in one strike. There are some styles that block first and then counter. In kuntaw lima-lima your primary objective is to stop the moment force then go where you want. We also have *agos* which are going-with-the-force and then countering. Some styles call it *ocho-ocho* or the figure-eight. I use my own version. It is like if you are going to shoot me. If I don't know the principle of *agos* then how



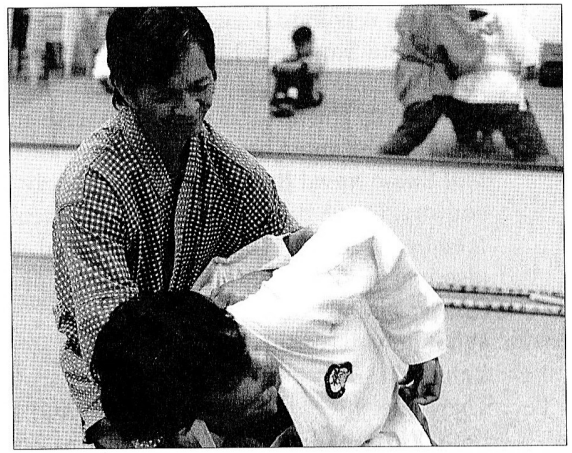
can I stop the bullet from killing me. It will go through me. If you stab me your knife will also go through me. A straight line is hard to break so you must go to the outside of the force. This is *agos*.

MW : What is your concept concerning joint locking techniques and their valid applications?

CL : We view locks in two ways. A joint can either move side-to-side or up-and-down. The locks that I teach are very common. What I try to emphasize is the patience in training. Reflexes, too, are a must. The mind and body must move together. The daily training will develop your reflexes. An example of our training is when you step into a forward stance and someone taps you on your left shoulder. Become you turn to the left you must first look to the right. If I want to move to the right, I look to the left. This is for 180-degrees turns only. If I want to turn ninety-degrees I first turn my head in the desired direction to scan it first. The eyes must always be ahead of the body. There are some Filipinos who do not accept the term "sportsmanship." That is why we always look by turning in the opposite direction when approached from the rear. Otherwise you may turn into someone's punch. In this way we prevent trouble.

MW : Footwork seems to be an integral aspect of virtually every Filipino martial arts. Does kuntaw lima-lima base its techniques on specific footwork patterns?

CL : We put our footwork into two triangles, inverted and regular. In the arts I am very practical, especially in kicking. The person that kicks high may have his bottom taken out. Why should I kick you high when I can strike you instead and keep my balance? If I kick high for



the magazine I will have many admirers but if I kick low and fast nobody will know what happened. Low kicking is more efficient because of balance. That is why people don't like to kick high to the kuntaw practitioners. Even with our eyes closed we can block.

MW : You claim that you are the legacy and grandmaster of kuntaw. How is it, with so many styles of kuntaw, that it is you who are the sole heir to this art-form?

CL : How do I fight professionals or survive with the many other styles? I was asked to join a certain association that wanted kuntaw. Maybe if I did not have faith, nor courage to stand on my own, depression would set in and there would be no more kuntaw.

I am of course the organizer of kuntaw because nobody else did that. I was the one to form the first national organization. But I do not claim the right to all kuntaw since it has been around since 1365. So, I do not have any right to claim the kuntaw style but I am claiming the kuntaw organization, Kuntaw ng Pilipinas, (Kuntaw of the Philippines). I then expanded into the International Kuntaw Association. That is why I am the founder and executive director of the IKA. As of now we have members in a number of countries adopting our style of kuntaw.

MW : How did you go about opening so many kuntaw schools?

CL : In the Philippines I started schools in small communities outside of the cities. My father's philosophy was to go from the outside and work your way in, not inside to out. Other instructors had money and therefore began their clubs in the city. When there was a tournament in the different *barrios* (towns) these instructors are surprised that there are so many kuntaw clubs already.

It was very hard. I sacrificed very much. I started from the Visayas, Leyte, and San Jose. I taught at the home of the [former] first lady Marcos' father. I then toured the Philippines demonstrating kuntaw. That is why the masters of Manila were surprised. I am also the only person to promote our own Filipino culture on Clarkesfield Air Base and Subic Naval Base. My father already brought the art to another country. I have the largest amount of members in Saudi Arabia. I say members because I don't like the word student. It is to strong. We also had schools in Iran and Lebanon but our government forbid my further instruction there.

MW : What do you consider to be a requisite for one to become a master of kuntaw?

CL : There are three categories to becoming a master in kuntaw lima-lima. We don't believe in awarding master's levels to those who win a tournament five times. It is wrong. To hold a master's rating you should have fulfilled at least the time and age requirements. You must be at least fifty years old so that you have developed a legacy. It is the experience. By being a master you should be well respected internationally; you don't only play in your own country. There must be exposure on an international level. And so, the three categories are time, age, and international respect.

MW : Do you have any last words that you wish to share with us and all future kuntaw practitioners?

CL : As a Filipino I want to talk straight to the Filipinos. Others should be made aware of what is happening in the Philippines. There are people who have never been to the Philippines and they will tell you that they know the way. They do not.

I would also like to thank you, Mark, for taking the times to interview me and helping to further spread the art of Philippine kuntaw.

18

Porferio Lanada

Arnis Lanada

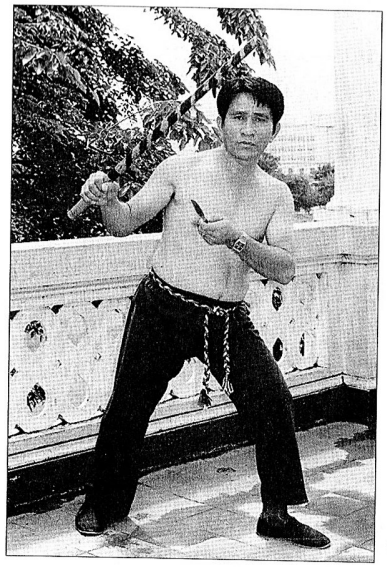
I did not learn any martial art.
But, this martial art that I have,
I am the one who created it all.
—P. S. LANADA

Introduction

Grandmaster Porferio S. Lanada was born on April 12, 1934 in Armenia, Uson, Masbate, Philippines. He goes by the nickname "Ka Piriong" and is part of a Philippine committee which is actively trying to get arnis as a demonstration sport in the Olympic games. Lanada has a background in arnis, karate, and Western boxing, and has appeared in such films as *Matador, Arnis Sticks of death, El Agila y Bulaklak* (The Eagle and the Flower), *Banana Magnate,* and *Tatlong Mukha ng Daigdig* (Three Faces of the World). In addition, Lanada is the co-author of the first book written on arnis published in the United States, and is the founder of arnis Lanada. On May 15, 1993, Lanada was inducted into the World Martial Arts Hall of Fame.

Background and Development of Arnis Lanada

Porferio Lanada began martial arts lessons at the age of ten years. From 1950 to 1960 he competed as a professional boxer in Manila, but discontinued his boxing career after meeting his wife because she didn't approve of the sport. Lanada also studied the Kobayashi/Chibana style of Shorin-ryu karate from 1968 to 1971 under Latino "Pop" Gonzales, the pioneer of karate in the Philippines. "I was intrigued to see the uniforms of the karate players as they moved together," recalls Lanada. "I was impressed by this

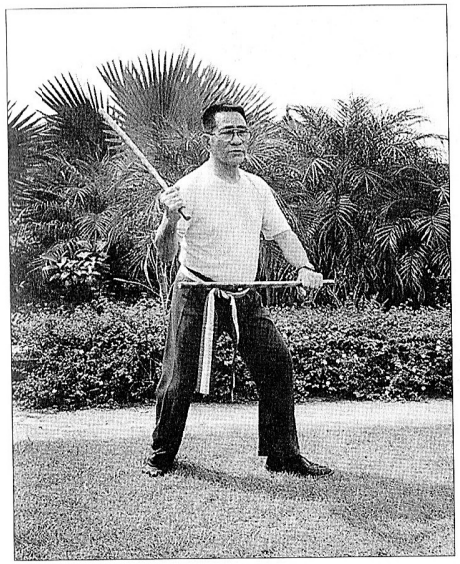


Grandmaster Porferio S. Lanada

and so I studied it. I got my black belt, 3rd Dan, but when I go to the *dojo* (gym) to practice one day there was trouble in the street near the front gate. The karate boys fought against the side food venders but run away back to their *dojo*. After seeing this I decide it is better to die to promote your own art so you can receive a good image, than to get beat-up under another style."

The act of individually creating a martial art, with no previous formal instruction, seems to be a common theme proposed by many masters of arnis. Lanada also claims that his art is the product of his subjective imagination and was not taught to him by anyone. While he did study both Eastern and Western martial disciplines, which certainly had an influence on the formation of his personal style, arnis Lanada is his system and not that of another master. So, technically speaking, Lanada did not learn his art from any one master, and takes pride in this fact. "I did not see any martial art," claims Lanada. "I did not learn any martial art. But this martial art that I have, I am the one who created it. At the age of ten I began to develop my system known as arnis Lanada. No body tell me, no body encourage me, but ideas for techniques get in my mind. No matter where I am the art of arnis is on my mind. Even now I can add some more to the system. I am always creating."

Since things seldom develop in a vacuum, and Lanada is somewhat vague about his exposure to the art of arnis, there are several areas which bring to light Lanada's exposure to the art of arnis. First, it has been well



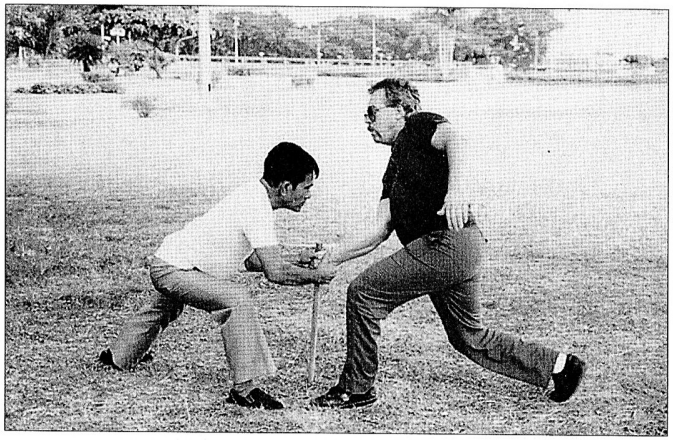
documented in various martial arts publication that Lanada learned arnis at a young age from his grandfather (on his mother's side) and from his maternal uncles. However, it is said that they did not teach him as much as he observed their practice at night under the coconut trees.

Another account finds Lanada's father an *arnisador* who, after his death, appeared before Porferio in a dream. In addition, Lanada's father was also said to have appeared before him as a reflection in a mirror demonstrating the rudiments of the art. It is believed that it was through the medium of intense training on the beaches in Masbate that Lanada's psychic ability to perceive the techniques from his deceased father developed.

Lanada says that he first developed the striking method of arnis Lanada, followed by their execution with footwork. After this, he developed the various defenses against the strikes and choreographed *abakadas* (forms) as a means of practicing the techniques. Disarming methods were developed for use stick against stick, empty-hand against stick, and empty-hand against knife. The hand-to-hand techniques were the last to be organized. "I then introduced my complete art of arnis Lanada to the people of the world," stated Lanada with respect to the completion of his art.

Fundamental Techniques and Training

The techniques of arnis Lanada revolve around the traditional components of *solo baston* (single stick), *doble baston* (double stick), and *espada y daga*



(stick-and-dagger, or long and short sticks), as well as empty-hand methods of striking and disarming.

The basic of arnis Lanada are found in the first five strikes known as *cinco tero*. They are executed in an X-pattern across an opponent's body. The advanced striking system or pattern consists of twelve strikes and is known as *doce pares*. Once the twelve strikes have been mastered the arnis Lanada practitioner is taught the *trece tero* or thirteen strikes. The strikes of the *doce pares* are initially aimed at an opponent's upper body followed by the lower half. Conversely, the *trece tero* begin with the lower body and finish with the upper body. The sixteen striking system of attack is the most advanced form and is taught only to Lanada's most dedicated pupils.

The strikes are executed in forward and backward straight line patterns. The patterns are arranged in three striking forms and three defensive forms. Lanada refers to the basic defense forms against the *cinco tero* as the "inside" and "outside" defenses, which finds the defender standing inside and outside the line of attack respectively. To train the application of movements, the first striking form is executed against a partner who defends with the movements from the first two defensive forms. The second striking form is executed against a partner who defends with the movements found in the third defensive form. Then, the first two defensive forms are executed and countered with arnis Lanada's three counter strokes. Next, the first two defensive forms are countered using single stick disarming and counters measures. To complete the training, the first two defense forms are countered with left-hand parrying techniques and counter stick strikes.

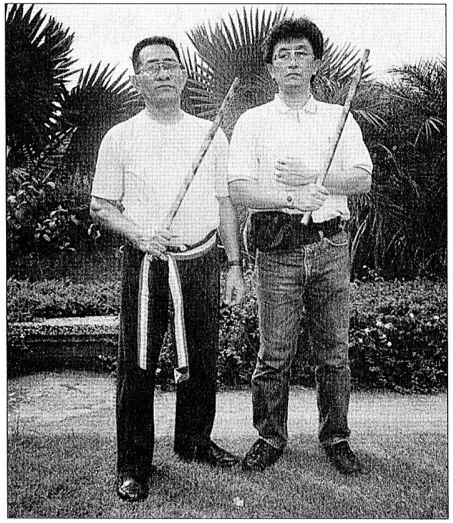
Arnis Lanada is generally characterized as a long range or *larga mano* style of Filipino stick-fighting. While this is true, Lanada is not opposed to

bridging-the-gap and maneuvering close to an opponent when necessary.

The primary ready position or fighting stance of arnis Lanada is to hold the stick in front of the body in the "open guard" position, not across it in the "closed guard" position. In addition, Lanada does not advocate stepping backward to defend against an attack if other options such as sidestepping are viable options.

With regard to sparring, practitioners of arnis Lanada wear protective equipment. The body armor and padded sticks are used to enable the practitioners to strike with full-contact, rather than light or no contact, and escape serious injury. Lanada believes strongly in fighting in the tournament competitions as a way to test the efficacy of his art, and to prepare his students for real life encounters. In fact, as a way of perpetuating his art Lanada himself was said to have competed in a number of tournaments and challenge matches.

Whether or not Lanada himself has competed in these events, which appears to be suspect, his students tend to do well in the modern sport arnis competitions. "I began preparing my students to successfully compete in any tournament," states Lanada. "Raymond Velayo, the president of Arnis Philippines, allows anyone to join the organization as long as they follow the rules of the organization. I was happy with Arnis Philippines because they did not discriminate against me. In 1987 I started supporting the sport competition by entering my students. The arnis Lanada group has placed in the winner's circle in every competition since then. Of the 1988 tournament champions, half were from arnis Lanada. In 1989 arnis Lanada won over thirty trophies! I am not arrogant; just proud of my students. I have been faithful to the organization and always supported them. I don't jump from one organization to the next. However, I feel it is



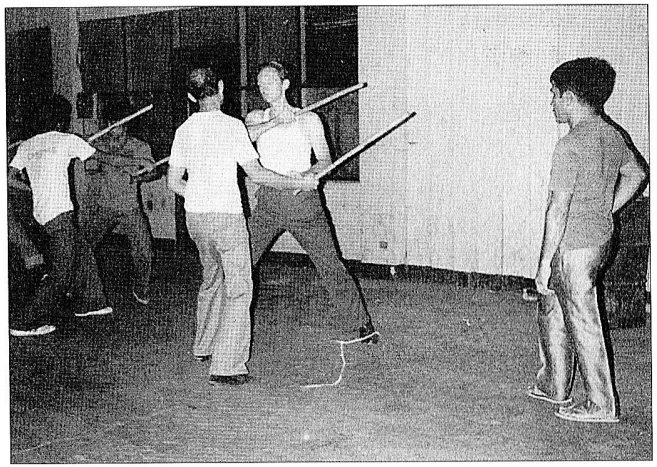
Lanada and senior student Alex Ngoi

time for a change. So, Alex Ngoi and I have founded the Philippine Professional Arnis Association, Inc., to promote the art in ways that Arnis Philippines has not—they are promoting the tournament side, not the warrior side."

Disseminating the Art

By the tender age of ten, Porferio Lanada was participating in the *barrio* fiestas by demonstrating arnis. In 1951, at the age of fourteen, Lanada went to Manila to introduced his art to the public by going house to house and offering instruction to those who were interested. One day, an old *arnisador* saw him doing this and told Porferio that he had nothing new to offer because he was too late. Manila already had schools teaching the styles of Doce Pares arnis from Cebu, cinco tero escrima from Pangasinan, and siete pares arnis from the Visayas. Not one to be discouraged, however, Lanada told the old man not to worry and knew in his heart that someday arnis Lanada would be accepted by the entire world. It is ultimately the public, Lanada believed, that would judge the usefulness of arnis Lanada.

The years to come saw Lanada diligently training and perfecting his techniques. "To promote my art and to show everybody that I am a master," recalls Lanada, "I put out an open challenge to all of the other masters. However, nobody was willing to face me in a fight. Remember the competition in July of 1979? I was supposed to be one of the participants in the battle of masters in Manila. All the masters were there: Cañete from Cebu,

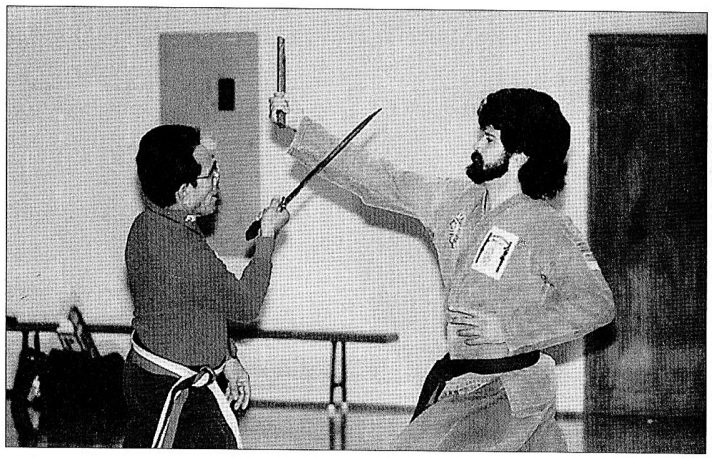


Lanada instructs Halford Jones in the Philippines, 1976

Maranga from Mindanao, Mangcal from Davao, Mena from Visayas, Lema and Pecate from Manila, and Navales from Negros. Before the event began there was a petition from the masters stating that I am disqualified from the event. I asked General Ver, the former president of National Arnis Association of the Philippines, why I was disqualified but he didn't know. I then asked the committee head, Dionisio Cañete, the nephew of Ciriaco Cañete, and he said that I was too young. I was forty-six years old then and the minimum age was apparently fifty. I told General Ver that age should not matter as I was just here to participate in this tournament as I too am a master of the art. I was later told that I was disqualified for five reasons: I was too young, too strong, too flexible, had too much endurance, and that I could easily adjust to the fighting styles of the other masters. It is not my fault that I am all of these things. I only did my duty to prepare for the tournament."

Although Lanada was unable to compete in this masters tournament, it is said that he has in fact indulged others in challenge-matches. It is said that he won a number by default—the other master did not show up. However, none of Lanada's students have witnessed these matches and there are no photographs or video tapes of them available. Although many dismiss the claim that Lanada is the fighter he claims to be, he is always willing and eager to openly "answer" anybody's doubts during his seminars. During a number of seminars in the United States, Lanada has been said to send the students home with their "questions" answered.

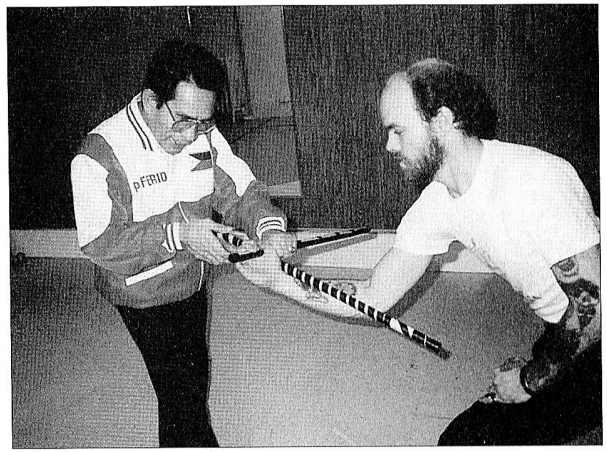
Arnis Lanada was introduced to the East Coast of the United States by



Amante Mariñas in the early 1970s. Halford E. Jones is the first American to study directly under Porferio Lanada in the Philippines. Due to philosophical differences with Mariñas over the publication of their book and the spread of arnis Lanada in the United States, Lanada separated himself from his early student.

"Before martial law Mat Mariñas was my student," recalls Lanada. "He was learning aikido in Quiapo under Gary Gallano when he met and watched me demonstrate my style at Gallano's *dojo*. Mariñas asked me to indulge him and accept him as a student. He studied under me from 1970 to 1972. After class one night he asked if he could take pictures of me demonstrating my techniques. I planned to write a three volume book series but after martial law I asked the sister-in-law of Mariñas for the photos. She said: 'Ka Piriong, Mariñas is already in United States and has the pictures there. He will be the one to write the book.' He called it the Lanada-Mariñas style but it was not—it was arnis Lanada! I was very upset but could do nothing about it from the Philippines. I am happy that my name is published on the book and magazines but I knew the time would come for me to be in the United States myself. After promising me three times to go the United States Mariñas did not come through on his promises."

Mariñas' former top students, Bob Torres and Dennis Tierney, had accompanied him to Manila in 1987. They received lessons directly under Grandmaster Lanada in Rizal Park over the course of fifteen days. "I gave them instructor certificates in arnis Lanada at that time," states Lanada. "When they returned to the United Sates they told Mat Mariñas that although he claimed to be teaching arnis Lanada the techniques I had shown them were different. Mariñas said that if they didn't like him they can find

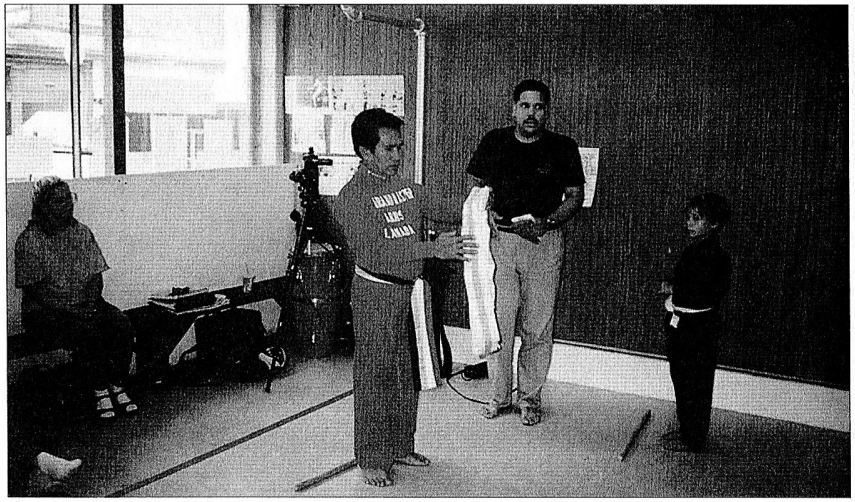


their own instructor. They sent me a letter to prepare my papers and they brought me and my student, Alex Ngoi, to the United States in 1988. The first trip I was confined largely to the New York/New Jersey area. However, the second trip found me in Connecticut, Vermont, Massachusetts, Main, and New Hampshire, as well."

Sadly, Grandmaster Lanada also had a falling-out with Torres and Tierney after his second trip to the United States. This occurred as a result of a misunderstanding with their sponsoring Edgar Sulite to come to the United States. Lanada felt this was a sign of disloyalty; Torres and Tierney saw this as a sign of friendship and support of their comrade. "Nobody from the original East Coast group is still with me except for Halford Jones in New Hampshire and George Brewster in Massachusetts," says Lanada with a sigh. "But, I also have many more students in the United States now who also come to the Philippines to train with me."

Islamic Ranks and Christian Beliefs

Originally, to distinguish between ranks in his system, Lanada used T-shirts with the color scheme of white, yellow, green, brown, and black. He also merely designated arnis practitioners as beginners, advanced students, experts, and master or teacher. However, now the designated ranks in arnis Lanada are signified by a sash tied around the waist with colors to match those of the Filipino flag. The colored sashes, moreover, are accompanied by various titles: *baguhan* (beginner), *pangunahin* (primary), *panggitna* (intermediate), *abante* (advance) or *likha* (creation of product), *dalubhasa* (expert) or *lakan* (chieftain). Advanced titles include *tagapagsanay*, a person



Lanada presents his new ranking system

designated to train, lead instruction, review, and drill others as the chief instructor on a continuing basis. *Tagapagturo* is a person holding an official certificate of instructorship as well as the rank of *lakan* (red sash), usually conferred by Grandmaster Lanada, as not every *lakan* is authorized to teach, though he may train others. The chief instructors are called *unang tagapagturo* (first or head instructor), *guro* (teacher), *guro mataas* (high teacher) or *punong-guro* (principal or head teacher). The term *maestro* is used for master and *dakilang-guro* for grandmaster.

"Although my religion is Iglesia ni Kristo (Church of Christ), this ranking was made in our conversation with Bob Torres and Dennis Tierney in the United States. Torres said that since arnis Lanada is very different than the other systems people must think that our system of belting is from the Muslims—the originators of the Filipino martial arts. This is no problem to me." The formal ranking with Islamic titles and certificates is reserved for those who really embrace the system and prove their loyalty. Thus, *jakan* is related to one of the sacred pillars in monastic temples, while *lakan* means lord or chieftain (for males) and is considered an equivalent of a black belt ranking. The term *dayang* is the female equivalent. A *datu* is a local chieftain, while rajah signifies royal and so, anyone holding a rank of *raja* his a considered to be a "prince" of arnis.

Ka Piriong's conversion to Iglesia ni Kristo is part of his later life in Manila. Iglesia ni Kristo is an indigenous religion based on the teachings and efforts of Felix Manalo, who is considered to be the one spoken of in a certain Bible passage, who brings a message from the East. The churches of

Iglesia ni Kristo are very distinctive in design and look like temples. However, they are eclectic in nature. There are certain other things associated with the group such as tithing. Some things are similar to those of the Seventh-Day Adventist groups, from which Manalo started out apparently.

While Lanada makes little attempt to convert his students to Iglesia ni Kristo, he nevertheless attempts to be a devoted follower and reads the *Bible*. He tends, therefore, to reject many of the practices associated with arnis which might be considered pagan, animistic, Islamic, or superstitious. He does not believe in *anting-anting*.

If one looks closely at arnis Lanada, they will see its underlying religious symbolism. For example, the five strikes are associated with Christ and the four Apostles, Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John. Moreover, the Twelve strikes are symbolic of the twelve disciples, while the thirteen represent Christ and his twelve disciples.

Whether or not anyone can authenticate the true origins of arnis Lanada, Lanada's challenge matches, or can determine the difference between arnis Lanada and other systems of arnis, the art has influenced many groups including Vee arnis jitsu, Lastra arnis, kalasag kali-kuntao, arku tai pa, yaw-yan, and pananandata Mariñas. When all is said and done, Grandmaster Lanada has in fact been successful in spreading his art to the public and receiving world recognition as a peer recognized grandmaster of arnis.

19

Benjamin Luna Lema

Lightning Scientific Arnis

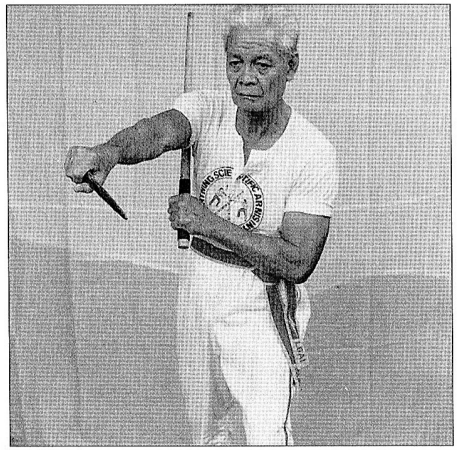
The mind and body of the martial artist is conditioned
through countless moments of training,
to serve the purpose of self-defense
with prudence when life and honor depend on it.
—B. L. LEMA

Introduction

Grandmaster Benjamin Luna Lema was born on March 19, 1919 in Mambusao Capiz, Panay Island, Philippines, and was first exposed to martial arts from father, Juan Luna Lema. Ben completed his elementary school studies in Mambusao, attended high school courses in Roxas City, and spent two years in college where he studied commerce. While in Roxas City, Lema diligently pursued the study of karate, combat judo, boxing, and body building. While in Guam he met and married his wife, Maxima Perez. They had four children, Patty Jean, Benjamin Joseph, John Edward, and Paul Anthony.

Experience, the Best Teacher

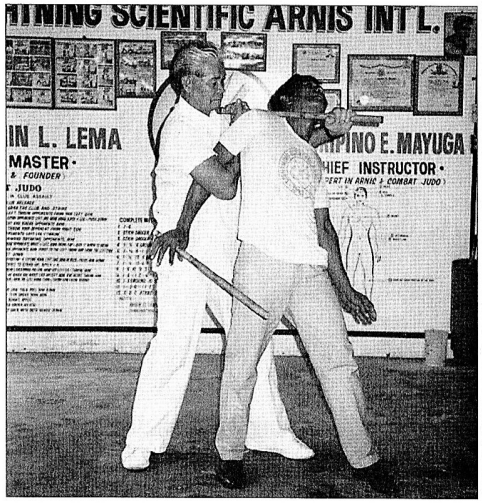
Ben Lema was seventeen years old when he began learning the arnis style of *espada y daga* from his father, Juan. "I learned privately under my father," recalls Lema. "He concentrated on physical fitness and drills to hone our reflexes." In 1937, an eighteen year old Ben founded the Lightning Arnis Club in Mambusao, Capiz, Philippines. His personal aim and the purpose of the club was to systematize the Filipino art of self-defense that he inherited from his father who, in turn, inherited it from Lema's grandfather. Lema and his students were fond of the art and traveled between towns and to a number of nearby provinces on Panay Island where they met a number of the respected "old-timers," or masters of arnis, such as Master Mauro Buhat, Master Jose Fernandez, and Master Lorenso Lengson. It was under the tutelage of these masters that Lema studied and perfected the styles of *larga mano* (long range) and *de salon* (close quarters).



Grandmaster Benjamin Luna Lema

"I trained under plenty of *arnisadors* in Iloilo," states Lema. "I would learn from one and then ask who was the best, and train with him. We had to be careful when we met each other because at that time there was no [body] armor, no protection, just your hands. If you had no control you could [accidentally] kill your opponent." Fond of fighting, Lema would tell people that he was a practitioner of arnis. In those days this type of overt advertising of skill was virtually unheard of. For one to boast or openly discuss their skills in hand-to-hand combat was an open invitation to challenges from other experts. "I heard that someone was teaching at a place that I knew," recalls Lema. "Since I had studied under my father and the other masters I wanted to challenge them. I had more encounters of this kind than anyone else. If you are the best one over here, and he is the best one over there, you will fight to see who is really the best."

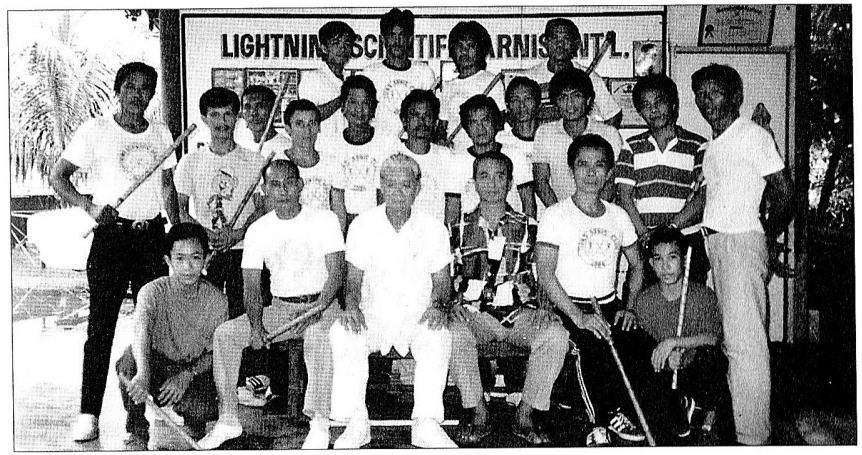
Often referred to as a "jack of all trades and master of some," Benjamin Luna Lema is purported to be an undefeated champion in both tournament competition and street encounters. In fact, when only twenty-one years old, and still a student of arnis, Lema won first place in the regional arnis exhibition held in Capiz. At the age of twenty-two, Lema was awarded his instructorship in arnis and fought in a number of local competitions held in Iloilo City and Bacolod City, Negros Occidental.



Speaking of his mastery of arnis, Lema states that there is no grandmaster alive who can best him in a one-on-one *skirmish*. "I was the one who beat the grandmaster of Cebu, Timoteo Maranga. Cañete knows about that, you can ask him. In August, 1979 we had the challenge of grandmasters in Manila. We all fought and I finished them (i.e., won the competition). I won because I got the technique. Their techniques are very simple to block. I even know the method of the sharp bladed weapon or *bolo*. The people from Japan cannot even beat me. They are all no problem."

Serving His Country

In 1941, Lema joined the guerrilla forces in Panay to fight the Japanese invaders. Lema also taught arnis to his fellow fighters in this underground movement headed by General Macario Peralta. This training afforded Lema and his fellow guerrillas the ability to defeat the Japanese with the use of hardened sticks and bladed weapons. During World War II, the Japanese burned and destroyed the town of Mambusao, in addition to executing a number of its citizens. Some of these citizens included members of Lema's group on the suspicion of being associated with the underground movement. Of the original twenty-five members of the Lightning Arnis Club, only five survived the turmoil of World War II: Saturnino Pestani, Rodrigo Ponce, Carlos Villas, Rafael Ceneres, Poldo Leones, and Benjamin Luna Lema. These men then integrated their respective styles of arnis into the formation of the so-called "lightning scientific arnis," with Lema as acting headmaster.



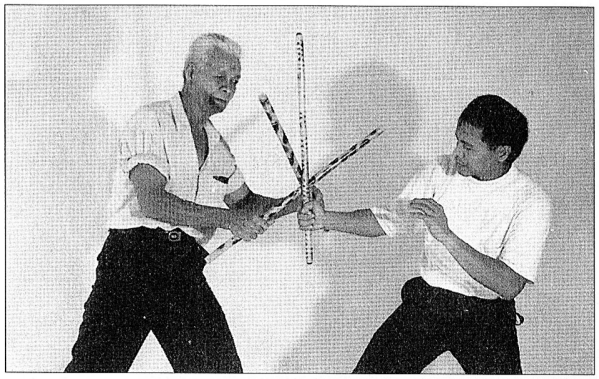
Members of the Lightning Arnis Club

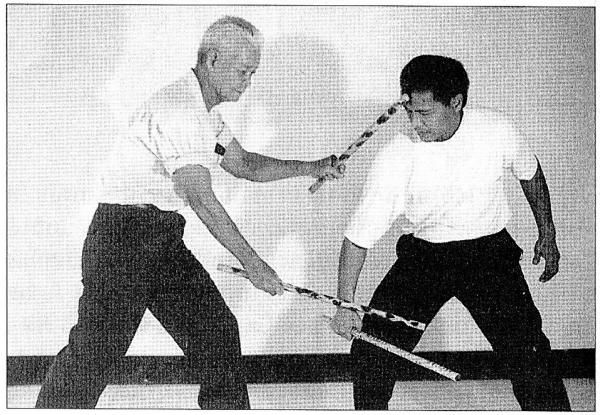
From 1945 until 1946 Lema became the arnis instructor of the Manila Police Department, then under Police Chief Manual de la Fuente. In 1947, Lema was requested to teach hand-to-hand combat to the personnel and enlisted men of the U. S. Air Force stationed at Agana, Guam. He was them appointed to the position of Captain of the U.S. Air Force Fire Department. While stationed on Guam, Lema took the opportunity to join seminars of U.S. personnel at the Kodokan Judo Institute in Japan. "I learned judo at the Kodokan in Japan in 1948," recalls Lema. In that Guam is a property of the United States, Grandmaster Lema argues that it is, in fact, he who was the first to teach arnis in America.

Lema returned to the Philippines in 1959 and settled in Manila. Immediately upon his return, he established the Lightning Scientific Arnis International, with himself as president and Professor Agripino E. Mayuga as vice-president. Over the years Lema has taught many celebrated Filipinos. Among his roster of disciples is the actor and former Mr. Philippines, Roland Dantes, business executive and lawyer, Raffy Rectyo, Vice Governor of Capiz, Noede Villareal, William Villareal, and Monolito Fuentes.

On Lightning Scientific Arnis

"When I was young," recalls Lema, "I learned how to strike the hand with my stick, then grab the stick and move it, as a counter technique. My art is different from the others because I have the three styles of *solo baston* (single stick), *doble baston* (double stick), and *espada y daga* (sword and dagger). Others only master one weapon, I mastered all three. Also, I have





Lema instructs senior student Elmer Ybañez

the *trece metodos* (thirteen striking combinations). I can show you something about this arnis up to thirteen, not just one or two or five like the others. I also have blocks, punches, and kicks. I have wrestling, too, but it is different than combat judo because I twist you like a loaded gun, not like a sport. I call this arnis *lightning scientific* because the stick is very fast and the techniques are very unpredictable."

Ben Lima insists that once someone has perfected his lightning scientific arnis system they will never want to study another style of arnis again. "Like the *baston y daga* techniques," asserts Lema. "When I would go to another town I would find their techniques to be awkward. I do like that when they strike their angles there is a gap in their defense; once they blink their eyes they are finished. That is why I roll my stick so I can block any kind of strike. Other *arnisador,* you see them block and pull their stick away [from the opponent's weapon] to counter-strike. That is too late already. But, if you block and strike underneath right away, that will stop

any style already." Although Lema acknowledges that there are an enormous number of systems and personal styles of arnis in the Philippines, he is quick to point out that many of the so-called masters are nothing more than showmen. They move with speed and yet hit with little power, he says. "There are so many methods of arnis but [against] lightning scientific arnis, they are no more. I can block and counter all of them. I've got single stick, doble stick, stick-and-dagger and all combinations against each other. I can also disarm both left and right [arms] at one time."

Lema develops in his students that ability to maneuver the stick with a great deal of energy and impact power. He is insistent that the development of the physical body is primary to becoming an *arnisador* worth his salt. "The power in the extension of the hand is necessary to delivering a stick strike if even at close range," notes Lema. "I can roll the stick on the account that I know how to extent my body. Your body must be coordinated all of the time. The power generated from the hand is strong because the weight of the body goes to the strike which, in turn, brings even more power. Your body must be in good condition so when you strike the stick you will not get tired. "

In regard to some masters' claims of possessing supernatural powers, Lema has this to say: "Through practice I can withstand a hard strike. There is nothing mystical about it—the power [comes from] my stomach. Wherever you strike me, I will just hold my breath on impact. I have no *orasyon,* no *anting-anting,* just natural ability. *Tatang* [Ilustrisimo] is the one with the *orasyon.* I do not meditate either. I just concentrate and always keep my mind on the present [moment]. When facing an opponent I am thinking that I know I can defend [against] his attack. I tell you the truth, some

grandmasters, if you are going to fight them, they say 'Don't strike first, just watch me. If you don't hit me, then I won't hit you.' It is very hard to believe but I don't wait for him to strike. I hit him and if he tries to hit me I will finish him. If you strike me, I can finish that very simply. I have the fastest speed and the strongest arm. Nobody can do like I can do. I can twirl the stick and they can't block it. Even [Ciriaco] Cañete cannot solve what I can solve (e.g., counter any attack)." Lema further states that one must not only master the individual techniques of lightning scientific arnis, but must also come to understand your opponent's intentions and all possible counters to any counter attack that may arise.

At the ripe age of seventy-five, Grandmaster Benjamin Luna Lema still assumes an undefeated record in both tournament competition and challenge matches. Since 1952, he has been fondly known by his peers as *Maestro* Ben. "Back then [in the Philippines], they didn't use the term grandmaster. They just called you *maestro*. A nice word that they call you now is professor." No matter by which title one refers to Benjamin Luna Lema, he is at once a well respected grandmaster of arnis and a man who holds an unwavering belief in his art and himself.

20

Amante Mariñas

Pananandata Mariñas

If you want to go into the martial arts,
don't do it unless you want to become
better than the others.
You must practice, practice, practice.
—A. P. MARIÑAS

Introduction

Professor Amante P. Mariñas, Sr. is one of the fathers of arnis in the United States. Upon his arrival in America he immediately set out to foster a brotherhood among three of the top masters, Angel Cabales, Leo Giron, and Raymond Tobosa. In fact, he was asked by Leo Gaje to be the president of the first American arnis organization. Although declining this offer, Mariñas, instead, rewrote their constitution and acted as an advisor. Along with Grandmaster Porferio Lanada, Mariñas co-wrote the first book on arnis published in the United States. This out of print book, simply titled *Arnis de Mano,* gave Americans their first overview of the history and techniques of the Filipino martial arts. Mariñas is, notably, the most published author on the Filipino martial arts, having published over fifty magazine articles, numerous newspaper articles, and six books. In addition, in 1975 Mariñas was responsible for holding the first full-contact arnis tournament in the United States.

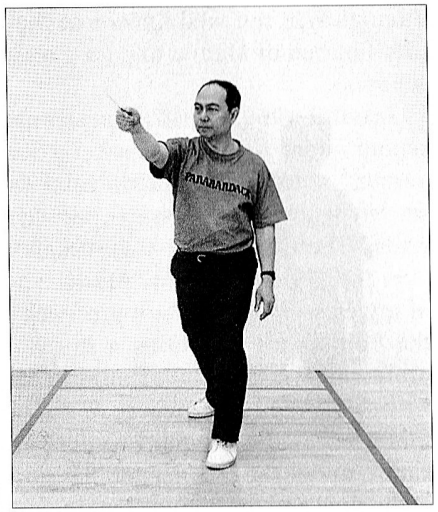
Mariñas' childhood upbringing is perhaps responsible for instilling in him an interest in the ancient weaponry systems of his ancestors. This interest eventually led to his dedication to the study of arnis, a Filipino art of stick-fighting. His childhood may seem unusual by Western standards,

but to a Filipino growing up in a rural village, it was anything but extraordinary.

Island Memories

Amante "Mat" Mariñas was born in 1940 in the village of Pambuan, on the province of Nueva Ecija in central Luzon, Philippines. He recalls growing up among rice paddies, guavas, and mangoes. By the age of six he was catching fish with his bare hands. Mariñas always wore a *bolo* (utility knife) around his waist as a matter of propriety when he ventured out of his village, as it served various purposes. First, he might come across edible wild plants which he would then cut, gather, and bring home for his families enjoyment. In addition, Mat recalls being terrified of the stray dogs, and the knife was his protectant. The *bolo* was also used for fishing. As Mariñas notes: "We cut through the water. In the rice patties the water is up to about mid-calf level. Where the water was clear you could cut at the fish with a downward strike of the *bolo*. If your *bolo* wobbles the fish would just laugh at you and say you missed your dinner." While fishing with the *bolo* one must move very slowly so as not to disturb the water too much and scare the fish away. "That is why as a kid we always had a *bolo*." admits Mariñas. "Of course once in a while, even at that young age, we are asked to retrieve fire wood from wherever we can find it. "

Mariñas recalls snacks as being neither convenient nor readily available while growing up in the Philippines. "Our snacks are fruits. Fruits that you have to find. If you want a snack you climb up a tree." Mariñas recalls the guava trees as being fairly easy to climb because of its strong branches. On the contrary, the limbs of the mango tree are week, and to climb them would result in a broken branch, causing the climber to fall. The mangoes were actually unreachable, quite high up in the tree. This act of mother nature made way for the development of skills in the *pilapok* (sling shot). He recalls his slingshot as being less of a toy and more of a necessity. Mariñas and his friends could acquire these unreachable fruits by shooting at them with little round stones which were found on the river beds. Mariñas recalls constructing the sling shot from the branches of guava trees. These branches are wide and divide into a Y-shape. After finding an acceptable branch Mat would cut a notch in them to make the Y-shape into a U-shape. The rubber sling, Mariñas fashioned from the inner tubes from used automobile tires; the leather that holds the stone, he made from the tongues of old shoes. "We had to have a good aim to hit the little twig that held the mango to the branch," recalls Mariñas, "for if we hit the fruit it would explode and be no good." Mariñas developed a fair skill in the use of the sling shot and at one time even brought down a very small bird while it



Professor Amante P. Mariñas

was in flight. Mariñas states that he was only able to do this once, as birds are smart and when they see the stones coming they duck or merely slip their heads out of the way.

His interest in arnis came about because there was no other game in his village to occupy a child's time. There was no theater and no radio. In fact, Mariñas had to study by kerosene lamp. There was, however, an annual traditional fiesta in Pambuan during the month of March. This fiesta featured a play known as *arakyo* which commemorates the triumph of Christianity over the pagans. Mariñas and his friends would eagerly await the arrival of the fiesta and the presentation of the sword fight finale. It was the martial actions depicted in this play which they would imitate for the rest of the year. At the age of eight, Mat was given his official introduction to arnis. These lessons came from his granduncle, Ingkong Leon Marcelo, who taught mostly by anecdotes, exemplified through the use of the *pingga* (forty-four inch staff).

An important influence in Mariñas' study of arnis was his introduction in the 1960s to Placido Yambao's book, *Mga Karunungan sa Larung Arnis*. In fact, Mariñas had already read the book prior to meeting his next arnis instructor, Porferio Lanada. Although Mariñas didn't own the book he loved libraries. "I always had four pocket books with me at all times," recalls Mariñas. "When I was in fourth grade I was already reading *Reader's Digest*. There is a United States Information Service in Manila and the guy in there knows me because I always took out about ten books at a time." They had a copy of Yambao's book in the Philippine National Library. Although

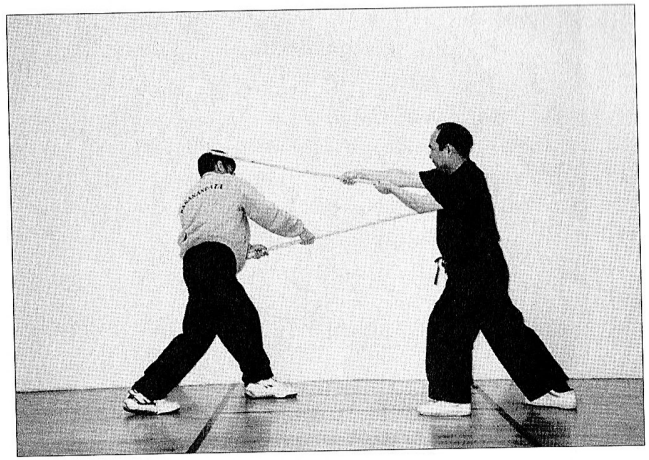
Yambao was not well known at the time, in 1957 he managed to get the City Council of Manila to pass a resolution that arnis be taught in the high schools.

Around 1968, Mariñas met Lanada. "I was working out in an aikido school under Ambrosio Gavileño Sensei, and I was already a black belt in karate," notes Mat. "Lanada came into the aikido school one day and he started teaching. I was into aikido and karate so I said okay I'll study arnis." There were forty-two students at the onset of Lanada's teaching but over the years it was only Mariñas and one other who stuck with it. "Most of my classmates were not professionals," recalls Mariñas. "At that time in the Philippines there was a separation between professionals and non-professionals: they didn't mix. When I was working out with bakers and taxi drivers my co-teachers in college would ask why I was doing that. I said because it was what I wanted to do." Mariñas had studied Shorin-ryu karate under the late master, Latino Gonzales, an eighth degree black belt at the time and the highest ranking non-Okinawan Shorin-ryu stylist. Latino Gonzales is considered by many to be the "Father of Philippine Karate," which he taught at the Philippine Military Academy, the equivalent of America's West Point.

A Matter of Honor

In 1973 Mat Mariñas came to United States and decided to concentrate on arnis. He arrived in June and one month later started to demonstrate this indigenous Filipino martial art. In not wanting to waste time, Mariñas immediately went to Jerome Mackey's karate school in New York City, and asked permission to demonstrate arnis. The manager asked Mariñas to come back the next day when his demonstration would best be received. Mariñas recalls having demonstrated for approximately five days straight. Mariñas related this account to Grandmaster Leo T. Gaje, Jr., who replied that he wouldn't have gone there if he were alone as Mariñas had. Mariñas' reply: "I went there with my wife, camera, a clean mind, and a clean purpose." The demonstrations were not without incident, however, as one of the resident instructors impolitely engaged Mariñas. "It was funny," relates the soft-spoken Professor, "because I gave him a stick and told to attack me. He did and decided to turn to do a spinning kick. The moment he started to spin I moved in and hit his thigh. That kick was not part of the demonstration, he was only supposed to hit me with a stick."

As a means of honoring his teacher, Porferio Lanada, Mariñas began teaching the arnis Lanada system upon his arrival in America. "To me," asserts Mariñas, "you must honor your teacher and that was my way of honoring him. Grandmaster Lanada actually wanted to name the art, arnis

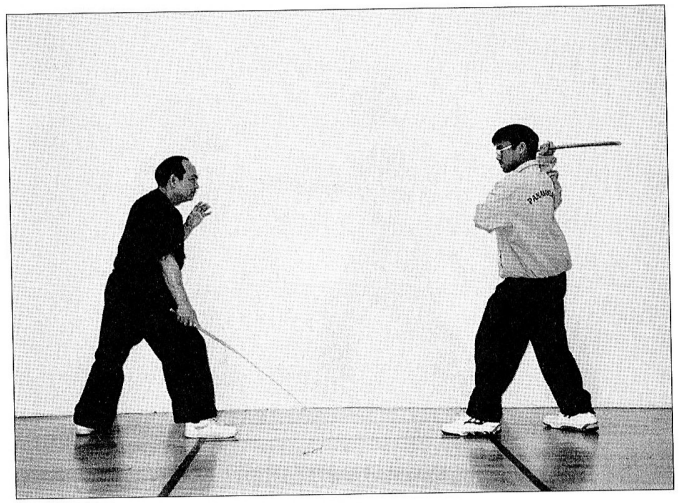


Lanada-Mariñas. In fact in the first book we wrote together, it is written arnis Lanada-Mariñas on the cover. In that early stage he really wanted me to become part of it. I would not have put that on the book without his knowledge or permission." However, Mariñas only acquired knowledge of the *yantok* (single stick) from Lanada and decided to break away from arnis Lanada when he started teaching the *pingga* that his granduncle had taught him. Mariñas felt that he must honor both of his masters and it would be misleading to continue to call the art arnis Lanada since the *pingga* was not a part of that art. Later, when Mariñas developed his *dalawang yantok* (double sticks) fighting techniques, which he based on his early childhood memories of the *arakyo,* he truly couldn't call it arnis Lanada because Grandmaster Lanada hadn't taught him the double stick system either. Mariñas later developed and started teaching *yantok at daga* (stick-and-dagger) techniques, as well as the *lubid* (rope) and *kadena* (chain). Mariñas also began teaching the *balisong* (butterfly knife), *hawakan* (side-handle), *latigo* (horse whip), *bagakay* (bamboo throwing darts), and the *dikin* (ring). Arnis Lanada did not embrace these weapons and Mariñas also felt an obligation to not disrespect Grandmaster Lanada's art. "Professor Vee asked me why I continued to call the art arnis Lanada and not arnis Mariñas," recalls Mat. "Very few people in the Philippines name things after themselves. At that time, the masters did not attach their names to their systems. They are pretty humble in that way. I didn't want to call my system "Mariñas" because it would not be proper. Somebody later may name it that but I won't do it."

The *balisong* and *latigo* were developed by Mariñas through a process of self-discovery and trial-and-error. Being a chemical engineer by educa-

Mariñas with Florendo Visitacion and Danny Paolo

tion, Mariñas has a naturally scientific way of analyzing things from many perspectives. In fact, he has developed over sixty openings for the *balisong* knife, no small feat seeing that the average practitioner knows only fifteen or so. With developing the horsewhip, Mariñas remembered a little from his youth. Although not recognizing its importance then, he concentrates heavily on it now. Mariñas' double stick system came by way of deduction, much like his *balisong* techniques. "When I developed my walking cane defensive training," explains Mariñas, "I looked at it from a week-man's point of view. I said how can somebody who has just come home from the hospital be able to use it. So the design of the techniques goes around it." While developing his new single stick techniques, Mariñas decided that anything that is not applicable during sparring would not be taught. "If you are going to teach," asserts Mariñas, "then teach something you can use in a free fight. Disarming is good but you need about forty years of practice every day to pull it off, and then you still may not be able to do it. If you have seen the *larga mano* (long range) style, then you know it is nearly impossible for anybody to get close enough to disarm." What Mariñas is referring to is the necessary ability to bridge the distance on an opponent in an effort to get close enough to effect a disarmament. Mariñas adds that "When you see an opponent's sticks coming at you the last thing on your mind is disarming him. Strikes come in at about two-and-one-half per second which leaves very little room for mistakes." Mariñas' *yantok at daga* style was greatly influenced by Placido Yambao's system which he studied by way of the latter's book for more than twenty-five years. "*Yantok at daga* teaches you distancing because you cannot really use the *daga* on

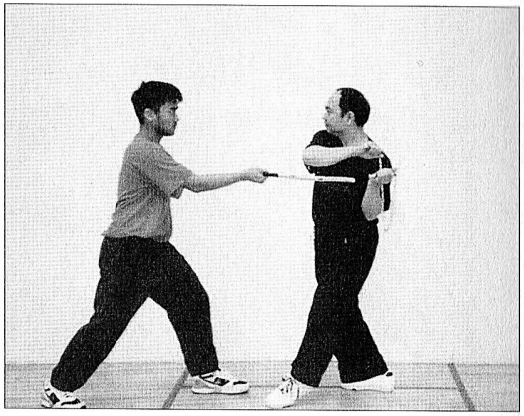


an opponent until you get close," explains Mariñas. "You have to lean back and lean forward. If you look at the *yantok at daga* from the south and my *yantok at daga* they are totally different. People from the south tend to tie up their opponent, I don't do that. I stay away because I love my skin too much."

By 1983, Mariñas had developed quite a few things on his own and felt that he had shown due respects to his teachers. He then decided to refer to his art as pananandata. A Tagalog term, *pananandata* refers to the systematic art of fighting with weapons. "Eskrima and arnis are Spanish terms," states Mariñas, "and kali is of Indian origin—Kathakali, an Indian dance, or Kali, goddess of war." It was also during this year that Mariñas started seriously writing about the arts of arnis and pananandata. "I wrote three manuscripts in 1983 and a total of fourteen to this day. Six of the manuscripts have been published. The rest are sitting in my closet." In an effort to differentiate Mariñas' system of weaponry from those of others, various eskrima and arnis instructors have taken to calling his art pananandata Mariñas.

The Structure of Pananandata Mariñas

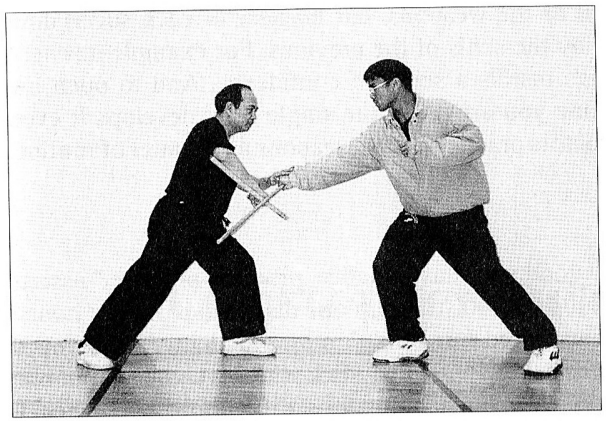
At the onset of training, Mariñas teaches his students the rudiments of proper footwork. As an example of showing its importance Mariñas relates a story about a nurse who works in a psychiatric ward. "At that point she had only been to class three times. One patient became violent and started swinging. She swung at my student who ducked. The other nurse who was



hit is currently in the hospital." Pananandata Mariñas students are then exposed to drills aimed at developing hand-eye-foot coordination. Mariñas also emphasizes the developmental use of the left hand. "We do exercises that develop the left and right hand equally," states Mariñas. "I have seen other systems and instructors who have forgotten to use the left hand. But, since you have two hands, especially at close quarters, you might as well use them."

After a degree of proficiency is achieved in the movements of footwork and a hand-eye-foot coordination has been adequately developed, Mariñas introduces the student to the twenty-two basic pananandata Mariñas attacks. Initially, these attacks are practiced with the single stick. After about six months have passed Mariñas teaches the same attacks with the use of the double sticks. Six months later the staff is introduced. "In the street," rations Mariñas, "chances are you might pick up a broom or a stick longer than a single hand can handle. Even with a big umbrella, you need two hands to effectively use it." During this initial span of eighteen months, if Mariñas feels the students can handle it, he instructs them in the use of the stick and dagger. Mat believes that once a student perfects the techniques of *yantok at daga* to learn any other weapons should be relatively easy as ambidexterity and a keen sense of distance has been developed.

Although a weapons-based art, pananandata Mariñas does include empty-hand techniques. In fact, Mariñas often teaches these skills along with the single stick although most people are unaware of this fact. As Mariñas explains, "Its not that the empty-hand is not stressed, I just don't say it. But, my students work on it all of the time. For example I have two teenage students with whom I emphasize the empty-hand training. If they are younger than sixteen I don't expect them to carry knives. They do empty-hand defenses against series of weapon attacks. It is almost like free-fighting.



After two years of training, the practitioner of pananandata Mariñas engages in free-fighting practice. Initially, the students participate in matches against the senior students as they have a better sense of control. Mariñas places such an importance on free-fighting skills that after two years of study each of his students must compete in a minimum of 300 free-fights per year. After a time, sparring sessions involve a cross section of the single stick, two sticks, stick and knife, staff, and horse whip. In an effort to maintain a high standard in technique, control, and intensity, each match lasts only twenty-five seconds. Any longer than that and the students begin to get sloppy, loose control, and waste time.

Other weapons, such as the *balisong,* are also taught prior to becoming an instructor but no sooner than two years. Mariñas encourages his students to specialize in their favorite weapon. On the same token, he awards certificates of accomplishments based on skills achieved in each weapon. "Some of my students such as Spencer Gee," relates Mariñas, "I have awarded the title of master of the *yantok* and also master of the *balisong.* Spencer has been with me for nine years. Its funny because initially he didn't like the *balisong,* but now he likes it a lot." Another instructor under Mariñas, Bob Rivera, is a also master of the *yantok.* In pananandata Mariñas mastery of each weapon is the goal because mastery of the system will take a long time. In fact, it takes a minimum of seven years to even be considered for an instructor's certification in the art, let alone a masters ranking. So, after seven years the initial certificate awarded says instructor of pananandata Mariñas. After that a student may receive a master's certificate per individual weapon if they so qualify. "I do not charge them for instructor certification, Mariñas states matter-of-factly. "Actually, there is no test. I teach in my backyard so I do not need it to pay any bills. Money is okay, I can use it to take pictures for my new manuscripts." It takes quite

some time to master all of the weapons, but mastery of each succeeding weapon is made easier by the skills of the previous. For example, mastery of the *balisong* openings instills a sense of confidence. And to open the *balisong* at the same time you are using the single stick develops it even more so. Mariñas' instructors practice paired weapons as a matter of routine.

Words of Inspiration

"If you want to become good you must practice, practice, practice," asserts Mariñas. "At one time I did 20,000 strikes in one day. It took me six hours. The next day my arm was tired but I didn't stop practicing. I developed arnis elbow because I was using an *anahaw* stick which weighed about one kilogram. Swinging was easy but jabbing was difficult with the heavy stick." For eight months Mariñas had "arnis elbow" and could hardly close his fingers or hold a fork. In fact, he is experiencing elbow troubles again. This time it is not because he is swinging a heavy stick; rather, he is practicing one-handed swings with a pole that is six feet long. As a final word of inspiration, Professor Mariñas has this to say: "If you want to go into the martial arts, don't go into it unless you want to become better than the others. Anybody can become a joker, it is easy. If you want to go into something do your best, that's all, even if it hurts. When my left hand hurts I work with my right, and vice-versa. When my hands hurt, I work with my feet. Whatever doesn't hurt I work on it. Repetitions is my method of workout. I work harder than the next guy."

21

Christopher Ricketts

Sagasa

Like a door, once you go in don't go back out
or you'll just to have to go back in again.
Therefore, you must continuously
attack your opponent.
—C. RICKETTS

Introduction

Master Christopher Ricketts was born in Manila, Philippines, on March 21, 1955. Known as "Topher" by his friends and students, Ricketts is at once well known and respected throughout the northern Philippines as a competent fighter, as the founder of a Filipino karate/kickboxing system, and as the chief instructor of Bakbakan International. In his younger days Topher was known to have bested a number of high-ranking and respected karate and kung-fu instructors in challenge-matches, only later to earn their mutual respect and friendship. After years of informal training in various traditional Japanese karate styles, and formal instruction in various Chinese kung-fu systems, Ricketts was in a fight which left him battered. He pursued a new approach to martial arts training through helping to sponsor the first open-challenge, full-contact sparring tournaments. From this experience and a number of subsequent street altercations, Ricketts went on to develop a full-contact karate/kickboxing system known as sagasa.

From Karate and Kung-Fu

Growing up on the tough streets of Manila, and not having an older brother

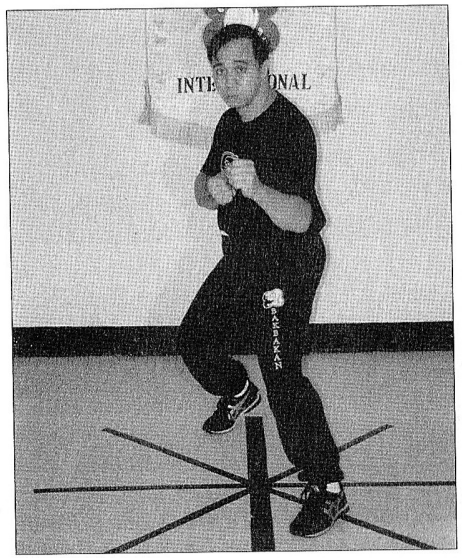
to protect and look after him, Ricketts was determined to pursue the martial arts. "I was scared one day when I had to fight five people," remembers Ricketts. "I told myself that I did not want to be scared anymore. I believed I could [overcome my fear] by gaining self-confidence from martial arts." Although he continued to get beaten up after learning various controlled sparring styles of martial arts, Topher feels that this training did help to foster a sense of self-confidence that he had not previously experienced.

In 1963, Ricketts began training informally in his backyard with a group of school mates. During his years in grade school and high school, he and his compadres held little concern for style-loyalty or tradition. "Although I started with friends," recalls Ricketts, "it was my own hard training that made me good. I went to different schools to spar with them. I went from one school to another, and then to another. During that time, if you knocked on somebody's door and they know you are a karate practitioner, they will invite you in to spar. This was during the early 1960s. Everybody wanted to learn karate. I also saved money to buy lots of books." Tohper studied the forms and techniques from his favorite books, which included Nishiyama and Brown's *Karate: The Art of Empty Hand Fighting,* Masutatsu Oyama's texts, *What is Karate?,* and *This is Karate,* and Robert W. Smith's, *Secrets of Shaolin Temple Boxing.* He was also an avid reader of *Black Belt* magazine, and remains so to this day. Although Ricketts studied the forms in various books and magazines, he was solely concerned with their immediate application in sparring, and little more.

While claiming to have had no formal karate instruction, Topher is quite proficient in a number of Japanese styles. Conversely, in 1969, Ricketts began formal training in choy li fut kung-fu in Manila's Chinatown. "During grade school I had a classmate from the Tsing Hua Athletic Association who I used to spar with. This guy always took me to Chinatown to see the various kung-fu styles of northern praying mantis, monkey boxing, Hung-gar, and white crane. I really liked the Chinese forms."

During his frequent visits to Chinatown, Ricketts befriended Sifu Jose Chua, an author of books on Chinese martial arts. Chua is fondly known as the Philippines' "Kung-Fu Dictionary," for his proficiency in over fifty empty-hand and weapons forms. Where Chua taught Ricketts the Chinese forms, he became Ricketts' student in sparring. Chua was a member of Chinatown's infamous Hong Sing Athletic Association. "Everybody talked about that school," recalls Topher, "so naturally I wanted to join."

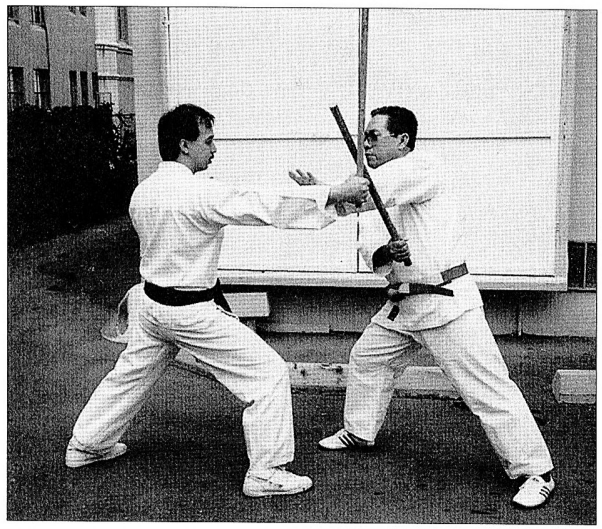
Ricketts also began studying ngo cho kun under his friend, Eddie Venalcante. He now continues his training under Masters Alfonso Ang Hua Kun and Alex Co. After seeing some of the art's techniques, however, Ricketts wondered why this kung-fu style looked so much like Goju-ryu karate. Ricketts was later surprised to discover that ngo cho kun is, in fact,



Master Christopher Ricketts

the precursor to Okinawan Goju-ryu karate. "The real essence of ngo cho kun is in the formation of the hand," posits Ricketts . "If you know the proper formation of the hand, it means that you are close to the master. But if you have no force, you are just one of the students." Although never officially joining Beng Kiam, the association under which ngo cho kun is propagated, Ricketts was a close associate. To his credit, he was always requested by the master, Lam Lao Kiam, to participate in their public demonstrations of the art.

Also during 1968, Ricketts and his associates decided to form a group they called Budokan Philippines. It began with a group of instructors informally getting together at Topher's house to practice and share their respective knowledge of the arts. "We were composed of different instructors," recalls Ricketts. "Some would come from Meliton Geronimo's Karate Brotherhood of the Philippines to share sikaran, Shorin-ryu was also there, as well as the Karate Federation of the Philippines, and Pilipina Judo-Karate Association." During the 1960s and 1970s, these names were synonymous in the Philippines for quality martial arts instruction. Later that year, the Budokan members decided that although they would continue to build Budokan, they would also consolidate their efforts and supporting Karate Federation of the Philippines. "I believe so much in KAFEPHIL," states Christopher. "Unlike other clubs, you cannot just be a black belt in this organization in a short time. They were the genius club, always concentrating on technique not commercialism."

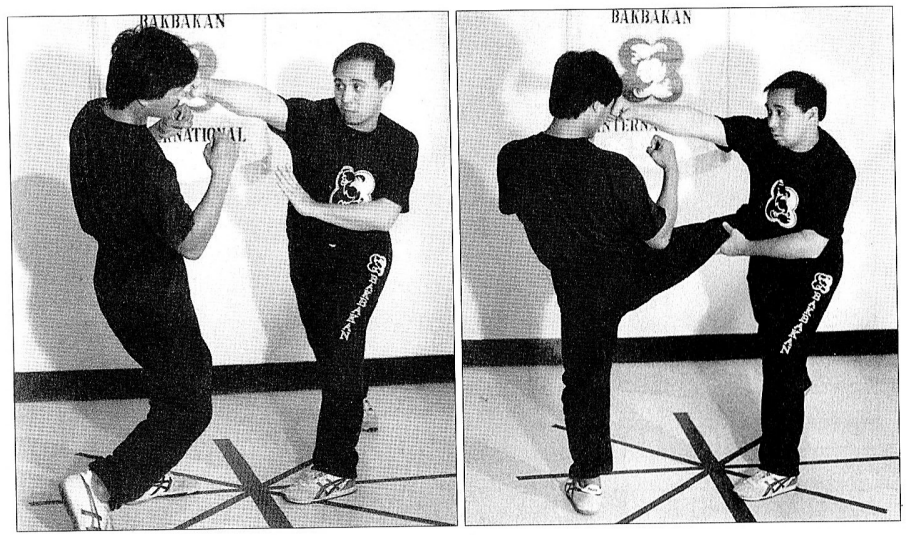


Dr. Lengson instructs Ricketts in arnis

With the support of his colleagues, Ricketts formalized the move from Budokan Philippines to Bakbakan International in 1969. Although he was an instructor in Bakbakan, Ricketts' thirst for knowledge could not be quenched. Consequently, Topher continued to attend training sessions at other noted clubs, such as Lito Vito's Red Lightning Club and Dr. Guillermo Lengson's shotokan karate classes at the Makati YMCA. "Dr. Lengson didn't really teach me the basics of kicking and how to punch," asserts Ricketts. "When I transferred to Dr. Lengson it was for the sparring. He had some good ideas on how to train. I thought his to be a nice school and wanted to be a member. Also, many of my friends were senior instructors there. Since Dr. Lengson is now in Los Angeles, Karate Federation of the Philippines is no longer an active organization."

A Taste of Arnis

Originally from Pangasinan, Dr. Lengson taught the cinco tero arnis style. He also studied with Grandmaster Remy Presas, who, after becoming proficient in the Balintawak style, later became the recognized "Father of Modern Arnis." In return for his instruction in Balintawak arnis and modern arnis, Dr. Lengson taught Presas the double stick drills known as *sinawali,* which Presas has become infamous for teaching to this day. It was the dream of Dr. Guillermo Lengson, actualized through the Karate Federation of the Philippines, that sponsored the first arnis tournament in Manila. The tournament highlighted competition in the classical style of *espada y daga.*



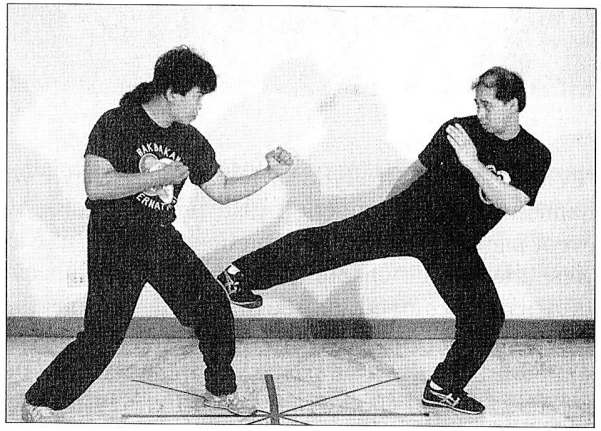
"Because I didn't really known any specific style when I entered the tournament," admits Topher, "I just did what came natural." Although this event marked Ricketts' introduction to arnis, June Larosa and Edgar Cleofe were crowned co-champions of this momentous event.

After the competition, Edgar Cleofe became Topher's arnis instructor. Cloefe's father, well-known in the Batangas, Quezon, and Bicol regions of southern Luzon, was a master of rapillon arnis. "During that time," states Ricketts, "we did a lot of basic stick-fighting. The style doesn't concern me anymore, I just want the beauty and the fancy movements." In fact, Ricketts thought that arnis was only about the execution of fancy movements until he met Grandmaster Antonio Ilustrisimo.

During the early 1980s, Alex Co asked Ricketts to stop by Hua Kun's club to meet an old man who was said to be a master of kali. "I met Tatang and Tony Diego together for the first time at Hua Kun's place," recalls Topher. "After I saw kali Ilustrisimo, I was surprised that he was so old and yet so fast. I knew this is something different." Ricketts has since gone on to master kali Ilustrisimo and to study and exchange ideas on kali, eskrima, and arnis with other masters of the arts.

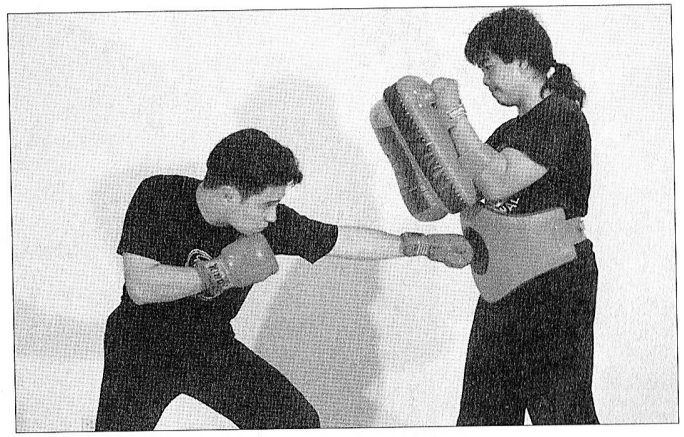
The Birth of Sagasa Karate/Kickboxing

In 1969, a series of four books titled *Bruce Lee's Training Methods,* was published by O'Hara Publications. Ding Binay, a close friend of Master Ricketts, started telling him about the purported skills of Bruce Lee. "I said



I knew him from the Green Hornet series," remembers Ricketts. "We did not copy any of Bruce Lee's thinking, because it so happened that we had an enlightening fight around the same time as his material started coming out. We realized that our karate was useless because of the control 'point-sparring' system. It really hurts to recognize and admit that you are a black belt and when you hit a guy he doesn't go down."

In the late 1960s, Christopher did not have a proper training hall. In the evening he and his fellow Bakbakan brothers would go outside and train in front of his house in San Miguel Village. "Sometimes," smiles Ricketts, "while my friends and students were practicing I used to go and fight around the village. One night, however, thirty guys set me up, like waiting for me because they know I used to go around every evening with my uniform on. These guys got mad because I was the tough guy on the block at the time. They waited for me and they asked me questions. I went down



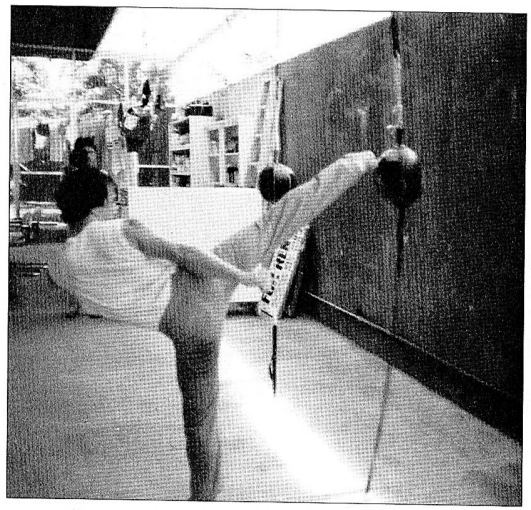
Miguel Zubiri training in sagasa

because as you see I am a black belt and a top guy. I said, 'So what do you like,' and we started fighting." Christopher was mobbed by these men and went running back to get help. He told his compadres what had happened and enlisted their help in gaining revenge. "I told them to give me the *nunchakus,"* recalls Ricketts. "So, with less than ten of us, we went back to fight them. To our surprise, they got their friends and were now about thirty strong. Christian fought about ten guys and I was fighting maybe ten guys and Edgar was fighting ten guys. They really meant to gang up on me. I was their primary target. I told myself after the fight that I had lots of bruises and hit lots of guys but they didn't go down. I realized that although I was a black belter and full of confidence, I was wrong to think so."

As a result of this experience, Ricketts and his training partners began practicing with sneakers and removed the karate uniforms in favor of training in street clothes or athletic suits. They also started to experiment with ground-fighting. "At that time," asserts Ricketts, "we decided that we better concentrate on sparing while wearing body armor. Although the Karate Brotherhood of the Philippines and Karate Federation of the Philippines were using armor, we [had initially] rejected the idea because they were out of form—just swinging wild because they didn't know how to box." Ricketts and his fellow Bakbakan instructors were successful in adopting body armor while maintaining their correct form. This marked the beginning of the sagasa karate/kickboxing system.

Skills Development and Training

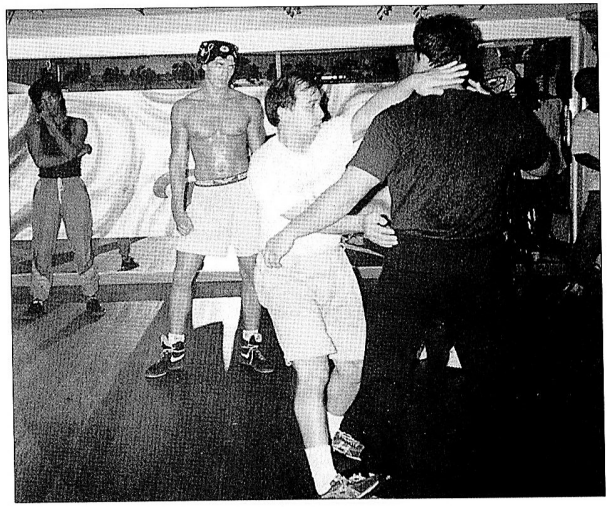
After his encounter in San Miguel Village, Topher was talking with Dr. Lengson about the pitfalls of training for the traditional point-system in



karate competition. "Doc Lengson said that this was wrong and that when we go in it should be continuously," states Ricketts. "Like a door, once you go in don't go back out or you'll just to have to go back in again. Therefore, you must continuously attack your opponent." The term sagasa means to overrun or overpower an opponent; to hit hard continuously so he is off balance all of the time, without recovery. Dr. Lengson came up with the name because it was reflected the techniques Ricketts was developing.

It was during Karate Federation of the Philippines competitions held in the 1960s and 1970s, however, where experimentation with sagasa actualized. Christopher Ricketts, Christian Gloria, Rolly Maximo, and Ray Dizer experimented, through actively competing in full-contact competition, with the fighting principles of sagasa. Dizer was the better technician of the group and, in turn, was responsible for drilling the others for the competitions. During the 1980s, Christopher learned Western boxing from the late Eddie Cañete, a former rated professional boxer in the Philippines. This training added greatly to the scope and refinement of sagasa techniques.

Fundamental training in sagasa revolves around a number of combinations executed repetitively, and known as "series drills." These series drills contain within their combinations various footwork, blocking, and punching maneuvers. Concurrent with the study of these drills, the sagasa practitioner learns and is drilled on various boxing and kicking techniques through shadowboxing, striking the focus-mitts, and hitting the heavy and top-and-bottom bags. These drills are performed in timed rounds which progress in duration and number as a student progresses in the art.



Ricketts choreographing a movie fight-scene

The primary objective of sagasa is to train the hips to move with quickness and agility. Concentration on hip movement is essential for the proper dynamics necessary to execute sagasa's dodging and blocking maneuvers, punching and kicking techniques. The lunge punch is the arts primary entry-technique as it exemplifies the essence of sagasa: to go in on an opponent and overrun him.

Ricketts continues to teach sagasa karate/kickboxing, kali Ilustrisimo, and ngo cho at the Bakbakan International Headquarters in Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines, while working in the action film industry as a fight choreographer. In addition, he is becoming somewhat introspective and spiritual. He is "trying to develop internally," admits Master Ricketts. "I believe the heart of martial arts is found in the slow movements of tai chi, and in meditation." In fact, Topher and other members of Bakbakan International are currently studying tai chi under venerated Wu style master, Hu Tuan Hai.

22

Edgar Sulite

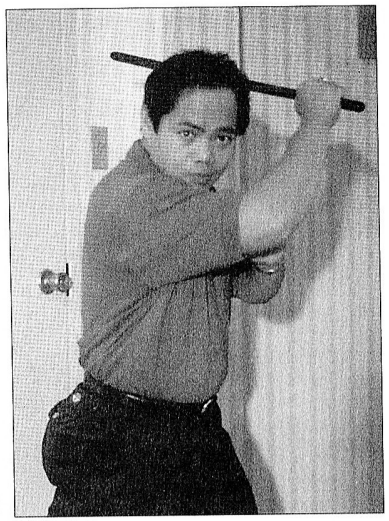
Lameco Eskrima

A number of masters want me to succeed them,
but it is hard for me to accept that
since I studied from the other masters
and will be teaching their systems too.

—E. G. SULITE

Introduction

Few masters have had an impact on the Filipino martial arts community the way that Master Edgar G. Sulite has. Born on September 35, 1957, in Tacloban City, Philippines, Sulite has succeeded in respecting his masters and bringing a sense of pride to his cultural heritage through his perpetuation of Filipino martial culture. He served as an apprentice under many renown *eskrimadors,* only later to synthesize their respective lessons into the formation of a system he calls lameco eskrima. Not losing sight of his masters' life-long devotion to the arts, and not wanting to leave them behind, Sulite has taken to naming the individual techniques of lameco eskrima after the masters who taught them to him. In addition, he has written three books in their honor, *The Secrets of Arnis, Advanced Balisong,* and *Masters of Arnis, Kali and Eskrima,* respectively. On June 30, 1989, Sulite relocated to the United States and has since taken the country by storm. In fact, he has become the personal eskrima instructor of Dan Inosanto and Larry Hartsell. From his numerous appearances in the popular martial arts magazines—including three cover stories—to his exhaustive annual seminar schedule, and his multi-volume instructional video series, Edgar Sulite stands above the crowd.



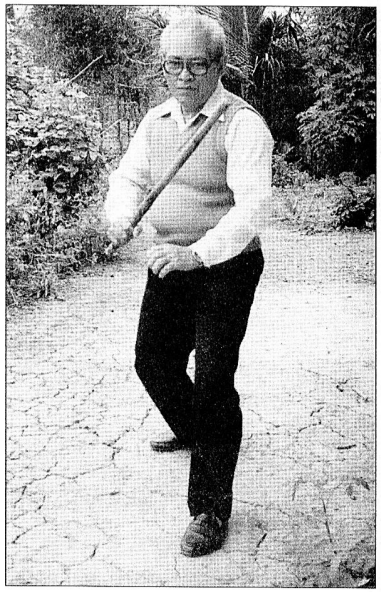
Master Edgar G. Sulite

Uninterested Beginnings

Sulite's first exposure to the martial arts came when he was still a small boy of six years old. He recalls a time when his father had taken him and his siblings to his grandfather Timoteo's house where, during the evening, he was surprised to hear the clacking of sticks in a distant room. "I saw my father and grandfather practicing sticks. I was very scared because I was thinking that my father and grandfather were fighting. But, actually, they were only training." It was Sulite's father who first introduced him to Filipino martial arts.

Sulite recalls his father coming home from work in the evenings. He would eat dinner, relax a bit, then call Edgar and his brother, Helacrio, Jr., into the room and ask the boys—one at a time—to strike at him with a rattan stick. "Before I could strike him he already hit me on the chin or on the head," remembers Sulite. "So, I don't like doing kali because it hurt, but my father always trained us like that." The style Helacrio Sulite was passing on to his sons was initially called rapillon arnis because practice was usually conducted by tying a stick in the middle and hanging it in the ceiling where it would spin in a multitude of ever-changing directions when struck. Helacrio later termed it the Sulite style as he learned it from his father, Timoteo. Actually, the Sulite style is a composite of the techniques taught to Helacrio from his uncle, Luis Sulite, and Melicio Ilustrisimo, the father of the revered Grandmaster Antonio Ilustrisimo.

"I'll tell you honestly," recalls Sulite, "that my interest in the martial arts is not really too good in the beginning. My father would not let up. I really



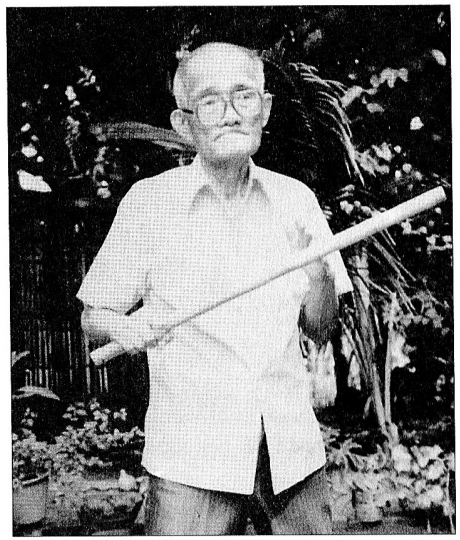
Master Helacrio Sulite

don't like to see the sun go down because I know in the night time my father will come home and beat me up again. So, maybe he wants to train me, or teach me, or to just experiment. I don't know. There was no method of teaching—before I could finish a strike there was already his counter. There is a hard physical contact. Even though he said it was control, it was with a hard stick. Being a boy, I didn't really like it."

"When I was in elementary school, grade four," remembers Sulite," I was able to see Masutatsu Oyama's *Vital Karate*. I really appreciated how he made the book. In its presentation, I think it is one of the best books I own and that is why I treasure it." From it, Sulite found an interest in Asian martial arts that he had not previously possessed. Sulite was able to observe a karate class across the street from his school where, by the time he reached the sixth grade, he was actively involved in the karate program, along with his continued studies of eskrima under the supervision of his father.

The Earnest Apprentice

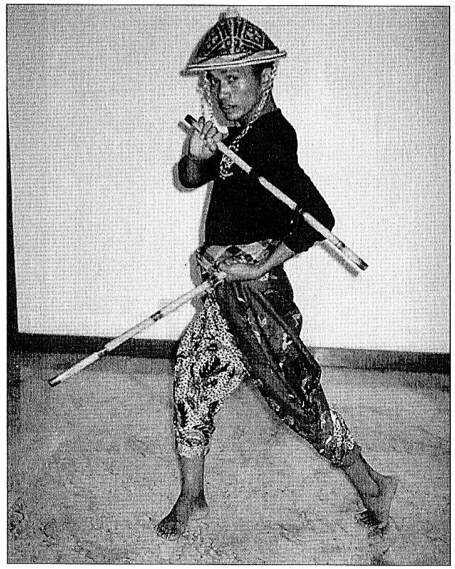
Edgar Sulite's first formal training came under the supervision of Grandmaster Jose D. Caballero in the system known as de campo uno-dos-tres orihinal eskrima. Prior to his meeting with Caballero, however, Sulite had met several masters (but hadn't studied under them) as they would visit the



Grandmaster Jose Caballero

Sulite residence to instruct his brother. Helacrio, Jr. was identified as a martial artist and protégé of the Sulite system because of his animation during practices. He was known to be a bit of a show-off to the people of the town because of his outdoor practice, where, for effect, he yelled loudly at the completion of every move. "You know," states Sulite, "the Filipino martial artists tried to test my brother to see if he is really good. Some of the master's of kali come to our house because they wanted to challenge him. But, my brother is a really good spokesman, he can make people from mad into calm. I, too, was informally involved with these masters. The main one was Grandmaster Marcelino Bayson and his brothers."

With a new perspective on the martial arts and an idealistic interest in his native ancestral arts, Sulite approached Grandmasters Jose D. Caballero and Pablicito Cabahug for lessons after moving to Ozamis City, in 1975. Since Grandmaster Caballero was popular in his province, Sulite recalls it as being very difficult to be accepted as his student. In fact, he had to earn the trust of Caballero for more than a year before gaining his confidence. "At first Caballero was hesitant to teach me because of my association with other masters. He believed that if you are from other systems and wish to learn from him, it is because you want to steal his techniques," recalls Sulite. "I was able to convince him of my sincere intention to learn. In time I became one of his favorite students. He had three levels of favorite students, the old level (age fifty and up), the middle level (age thirty through forty-nine), and the young level (up to twenty-nine years old). When it came to the young level, I was his favorite."



Master Yuli Romo

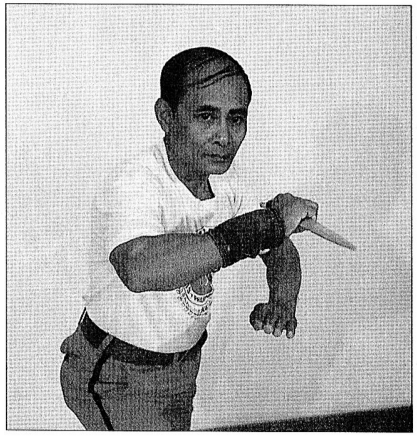
Sulite's meeting of Master Cabahug was accidental as Sulite's house was near the main road. Every afternoon he earnestly practiced eskrima techniques by striking rubber tires. Not knowing that Cabahug was a master, Sulite was a bit perplexed as to why this old man always stopped by the roadside to observe his practice. After he had watched enough he would acknowledge Sulite with an innocent "hello," and continue on his way. One day Sulite was surprised to find out that the old man who was observing him was none other than the master, Pablicito Cabahug, sparring partner of Grandmaster Jesus Abella. "One afternoon I invited him to come into the house," recalls Sulite. "I directly asked him to teach me eskrima. He replied, 'You are already good so why should I teach you?' I said I have lots of things to learn. That was the beginning of my training with Master Cabahug." It was Cabahug who was responsible of introducing Sulite to Grandmaster Jesus Abella, the founder of the moderno largos system. At this time Sulite was also studying under Leo T. Gaje, Jr., the grandmaster of the pekiti tirsia kali system. "He showed me some things," remembers Sulite. "I studied with Gaje, Caballero, Cabahug, and Abella. So, the systems I was exposed to and am most familiar with are the Sulite style, Ilustrisimo style, de campo uno-dos-tres orihinal, and moderno largos.

After graduating from college in 1981, Sulite relocated to Manila. "I never thought I would teach eskrima because when I practiced it was for my own self-defense, nothing more. In the province the training is different from here in America. It is about survival and developing the ability to

Sulite training senior student June Pueblos

protect yourself and your family." Since he was new in Manila and had no connections, the prospect of a job looked meek. In turn, he decided to engage his time in teaching a few close friends the art of eskrima. One day Sulite had a stroke of good fortune as he befriended and became the personal instructor of Roland Dantes, the five-time Mr. Philippines and national movie star. "I was with him and working in his body building gym as an eskrima instructor, when one guy approached me and said 'Edgar are you a professional?' I asked, 'What do you mean by a professional?' He replied, 'Do you fight in the ring without any armor?'"

Sulite replied that he did and asked how much money would be involved. "My father said that his skill was as good as some of the other masters but he never made eskrima his profession. He suggested that I better get another occupation. This man who approached me asked me if I want to fight in the ring for a prize. I don't have any money so I agreed," recalled Sulite. That fight was supposed to be between Sulite and one of Grandmaster Ilustrisimo's students, Epefanio "Yuli" Romo. When Sulite arrived at Rizal Coliseum, however, the promoter approached him with a solemn expression and said that because there were not enough people in attendance, there would be no prize money. "Grandmaster Ilustrisimo was there," recalls Sulite, "and asked the promoter to ask me if I would do a demonstration instead of a fight. I did a demonstration with one of my sparring partners, Lowell Pueblos, the nephew of Leo T. Gaje. After my demonstration my former opponent was surprised because I was moving differently than they had expected. They thought I was from modern arnis because they saw me with Roland Dantes. They thought I studied with him, when actually he was with me. Since Roland had the big name people automati-



Grandmaster Jerson Tortal

cally assumed I was his student." After witnessing Sulite's demonstration, Yuli approached him in friendship and asked from which province Sulite was from. This first introduction to Antonio Ilustrisimo led to a strong student-teacher relationship. Grandmaster Ilustrisimo and Master Yuli then invited Sulite to come to Ilustrisimo's humble home in Tondo where he began his formal instruction in the revered art of kali Ilustrisimo.

Apart from the instruction he received from his primary instructors, Sulite also studied briefly with Masters Ireneo Olavides of de campo uno-dos-tres orihinal eskrima, Billy Baaclo of abaniko de sunkite, Marcelino Bayson of the Bayson style, Manasseh Arranguez of de pluma arnis, Timoteo Maranga of Balintawak super cuentada, Dionisio Cañete and Ciriaco Cañete of Doce Pares Association. Sulite also studied under Grandmaster Felimon Caburnay of the lapunti arnis de abaniko system, but asserts that because he studied with them for a short while he gives them credit as being a minor-system influences in his lameco eskrima system. "When I go to Cebu and other places," remarks Sulite, "the masters are so proud to say that I am their student because of my accomplishments—I wrote three books. As soon as somebody is making good the masters claim that they are students of theirs. So, I learned something from them but I do not really consider myself their students."

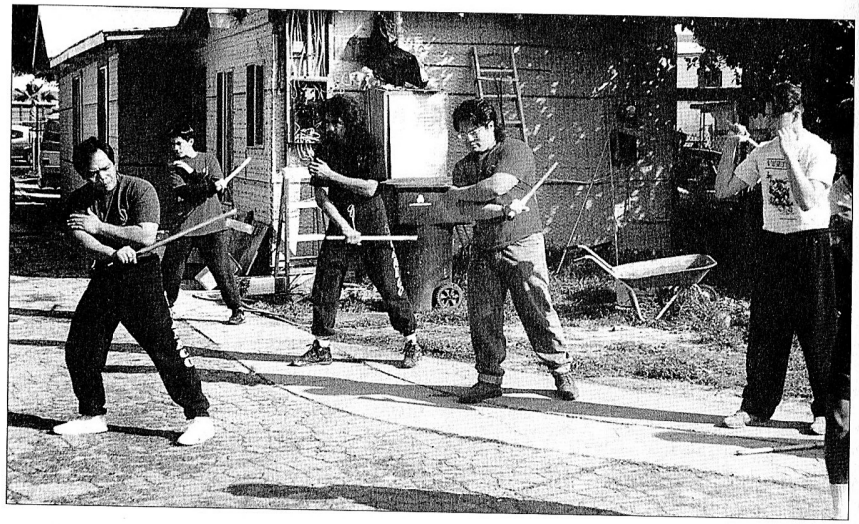
The Concept of Lameco Eskrima

"Since I am so in love with the Filipino martial arts," states Sulite, "each of the masters who I studied under really wants me to be their successor. Like Grandmaster Abella, while interviewing him for my book, *Masters of Arnis, Kali and Eskrima,* he asked me to be his successor. But since I studied with

the other masters I cannot. Suppose I want to be moderno largos—only carrying their name—honestly, I will be teaching also de campo uno-dos-tres orehenal and the other systems. On the same token, It is hard for me to use that name because when I teach it other arts automatically come out. So, a number of masters want me to succeed them, but it is hard for me to accept that since I studied from the other masters and will be teaching their systems too." To settle this in such a way as to not offend anyone, Sulite set out to combine their teachings and categorize their techniques into a new art. The system, he is quick to note, is unique in name only, the movements hold their origin in the styles of his masters.

In deciding how to categorize the techniques and lessons, Sulite thought it a good idea to begin by classifying the styles he studied into their respective ranges, from long to medium to close. Sulite found that although the system of Jose Caballero is complete in all three fighting ranges emphasis is placed on the long range movements. The styles of Abella and Gaje are known to be good in close range. "I am not saying pekiti tirsia is only close range," defends Sulite, "they also have medium and long. But, when I studied with Grandmaster Gaje and also his uncle, Grandmaster Jerson Tortal, their art focused more on close-quarters. When I studied with grandmaster Ilustrisimo it was medium range to close range. He has also long range but not like Caballero. So, I put Ilustrisimo system into medium to close range. My father's system specialized in close range. That is how I got the name lameco. Any system that falls into long range belongs to "la", for *larga mano.* All systems that use medium range techniques are classified into the "me," for *medio.* Any system that specializes in close range knife-fighting or disarming are put into "co," for *corto."*

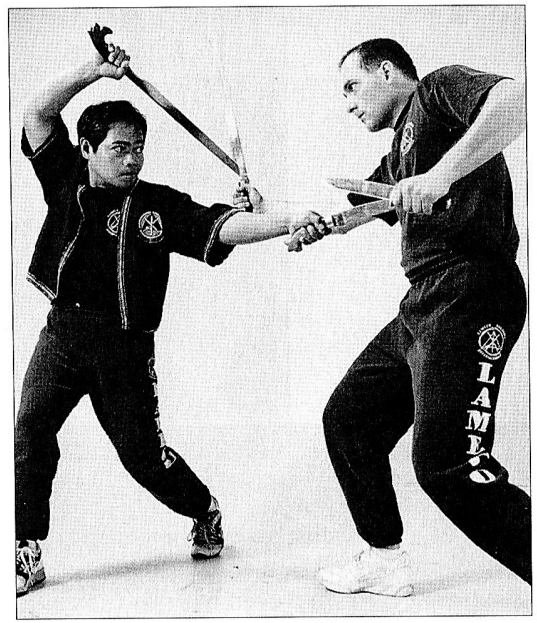
When laying out the grading curriculum for lameco eskrima, Sulite approached Grandmaster Caballero. Caballero was a good teacher whose system maintained the distinct levels of elementary school, high school, and college, thus lending itself to being more teachable than many of the other Filipino martial arts. "He gave me an idea of how to arrange the method. Before we graduated [from his school] he will ask you to make a curriculum on how you will present his system in your own way. This was confusing as he asked me to do that but before he died he sent me a letter to not teach his system to the world. That was the last letter I received before he died three months later. So, I break that promise because I love my teacher and want that his system be preserved. I do teach de campo, but not as he taught it to me. I teach it in my own way within lameco eskrima. If he was still alive and could see the product of my students he would say that the art is still there. It is only that the procedure or approach that I changed, but the techniques are the same. It was he who gave me the ideas on arranging my system."



In contrast to Caballero's approach, Sulite recalls there being a number of masters who had good systems but no clear method of presentation. Grandmaster Ilustrisimo, for example, is a good fighter but does not teach in such a way that the students can learn. "While Grandmaster Ilustrisimo used no method of instruction," recalls Sulite, "his top student, Tony Diego, arranged the Ilustrisimo system. Diego also studied other systems which gave him ideas on how to do it. The Ilustrisimo system is a good system, but Grandmaster Ilustrisimo is not a good teacher; he is a good Moro fighter. When you face him and strike from whatever side he will counter and keep countering until you stop. He will never go back to another position or technique. He never repeats himself; it is all reflexive. He is one of the best fighters I have seen. You know the teachers are divided into three groups: good fighter, good teacher, or both. Ilustrisimo is a good fighter only. You must be with him for a long time to capture his essence. The method of learning kali Ilustrisimo—someone must attack him so that we can analyze his movements. That is how we learned it." Although difficult, Sulite posits that he understood what his masters were conveying but swore that if ever he was to teach, it would be in a way that the average student could comprehend. "I knew that if I was going to present lameco eskrima to the world I must do it clearly with detailed explanations."

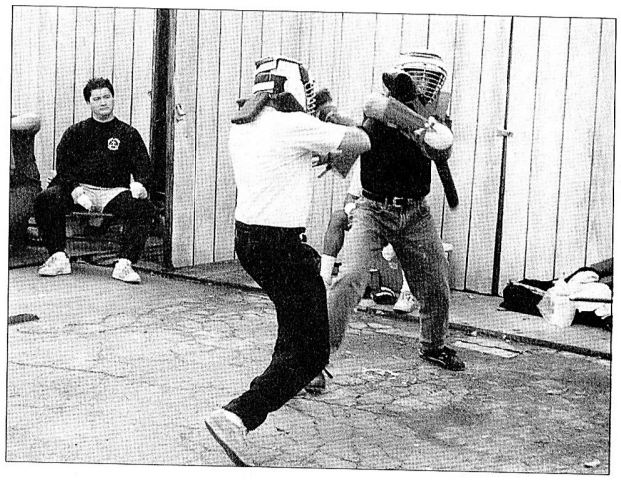
The Foundation of an Art

The most important element of lameco eskrima is its twelve basic strikes. Whatever range the lameco student find himself the twelve strikes are ap-



plicable, even if they don't necessarily follow their prearranged sequence. "The combination of basics becomes the advanced," states Sulite. "The person who cannot execute the strikes well hasn't mastered the basic foundation. In the foundation we do twelve footworks which come from the different masters." Without footwork it is impossible to become a good fighter. It is not enough for the lameco eskrima practitioner to be good at striking, he must also have mastered the footwork. It follows that if you miss a block in medium range (the hitting distance), you use the footwork to maneuver into the long range (the safe distance). In addition, the variations of footwork can aid the lameco eskrima exponent in his countless transitions from long to medium, from medium to close, and from close to long ranges during a sparring session or a self-defense situation.

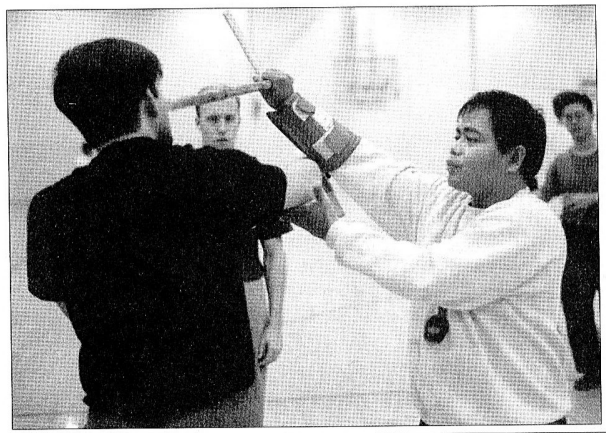
First and foremost, lameco eskrima is known as a system of drills. It is the progressive nature of these drills that develops honed reflexes. It should be noted that these drills, called *laban-laro,* are not only memorized and performed in rote. On the contrary, the student must study them to gain a deeper understanding of their various applications. So, not only does the lameco student come to know how to execute a block, but is able to coordinate his body with the block to effect a follow-up counter striking sequence, while maintaining a defensive posture. This is possibly as close as one can get into freestyle fighting while remaining in a drill. In fact, Sun-



day training at Sulite's home in southern California is known as "Sunday school"—all out full-contact sparring sessions with limited restrictions. There is some padding, however, but it is used as a protection for the bones, not a shield for blocking.

So, what is it that makes lameco eskrima different from other Filipino stick-fighting arts? According to Master Sulite it is its focus on intention. "That is a must in lameco eskrima," asserts Sulite. "You must have the intention when practicing by yourself by visualizing the different strikes and your targeting to hit the body parts. It is the focus and intention which makes lameco eskrima different from the rest. Others practice kali but they fail to emphasize the intention of a strike with full power and focus on the target."

For one to develop the ability to strike with full power and intention and actually hit the target takes a command over the strengths and weaknesses of the three combat ranges. Sulite defines the ranges in this way: "When standing facing an opponent with sticks extended and the tips touching the wrists, this is long range; when standing with arms extended and one's hand touching his opponent's elbow, this is medium range; when standing with arms extended and one's hand is able to touch his opponent's shoulder, this is close range. In other systems they fail to analyze that," claims Sulite. "Even though they are already in medium range they fail to realize that they are in medium range. When their opponent goes into long range they fail to analyze that and try to block the stick. But, in long range you cannot block the stick, you must hit the hand or anything he exposes close to your body. In long range they still go stick to stick but if you analyze this you will find that your blocking is not effective anymore. You must



use the blocks in medium and close range. When you are in medium to close range and have no more chance to use footwork to move into long range, then you can sometimes block or parry or use the check hand. That is why I emphasize telling the students to analyze and be able to gauge or know what ranges they are in. There are techniques that are only workable in long range or close range or medium range. If the ranges are not really explained to a student it will be very hard for him to understand."

Having the ability to expose an art to the people and have them understand its strengths and weaknesses is the strongest quality of Master Edgar G. Sulite. As a result, his students have successfully grasped the concepts and techniques of Filipino martial arts through the system known to the world as lameco eskrima.

23

Bobby Taboada

Balintawak Arnis Cuentada

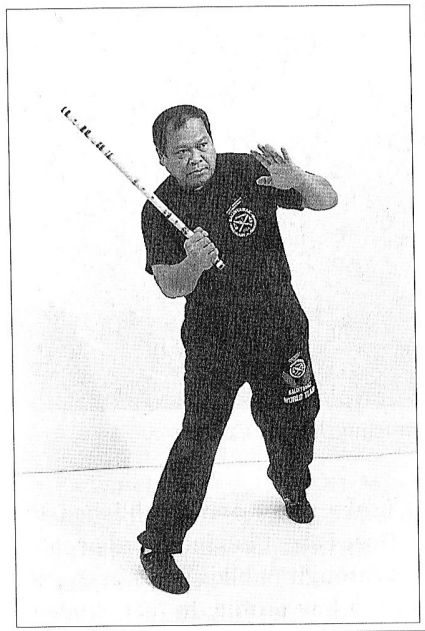
In my youth, training was hard
and I was the punching bag
of my teachers. I became tough and
accepted all challenges.
—G.B. TABOADA

Introduction

Grandmaster Guillermo "Bobby" Taboada was born on November 6, 1948, in Cebu City, Philippines. He is the eldest of five children and grew up fighting in the streets of Cebu. At the age of twelve years, he was introduced to the art of eskrima by his father, Sergio Taboada. A soft spoken man, Taboada has perpetuated the art of arnis throughout the world through his seminars in the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. He has met many of the top martial arts practitioners the world has to offer and has received praise from such men as Dan Inosanto, Wally Jay, Benny Urquidez, Remy Presas, and Willie Lim, among others. While Bobby Taboada does not claim to know everything, he is the grandmaster of Balintawak arnis cuentada and teaches it as a defensive means to peaceful ends.

History of Balintawak Arnis

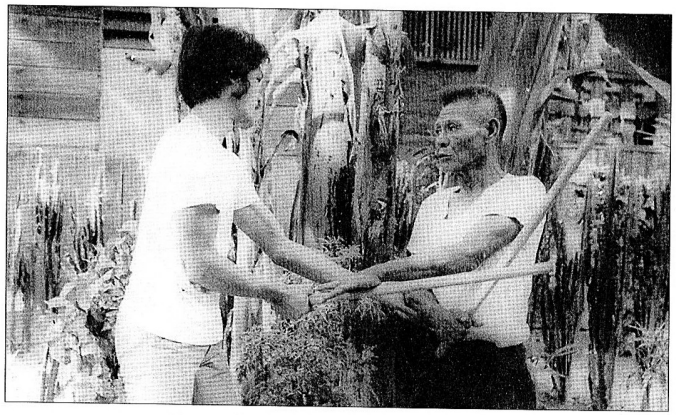
Arnis gained peripheral exposure in Cebu prior to World War II through performances by masters of the art during town fiestas and other public gatherings. In the late 1920s, Venancio "Anciong" Bacon organized the



Grandmaster Bobby Taboada

Filemon Caburnay, Johnny Chiuten, Anciong Bacon

Labangon Fencing Club. Bacon was a student of the revered Visayan eskrima master, Tatang Enso Echeverria. The name of the Labangon Fencing Club was later changed by Bacon to what is now known as the Doce Pares Club. Under the direction of Bacon the art grew in popularity and the Doce Pares Club gained adherents by the hundreds. In 1939, the club was joined by Eulogio "Euling" Cañete, who now runs the club. As a result of philosophi-



Bacon instructing Johnny Chiuten

cal differences with Cañete, Anciong broke away and established the Balintawak Self-Defense Club. While the Doce Pares Club increased people's understanding and appreciation of arnis through public shows and demonstrations, Bacon's Balintawak club kept a low profile. In fact, students were discouraged from participating in stage-shows and tournaments since they promoted the warrior's art as a sport. Bacon was opposed to making a spectacle of arnis and believed that real fighting techniques are not conducive to capturing the attention of a crowd.

Balintawak arnis was named after the revolution against Spanish colonizers in the Philippines, which was initiated in the province of Balintawak. The name Balintawak was also given to the small street in Cebu City where the first Balintawak Arnis Club was founded. Bacon taught arnis in an old shack next to a pig sty. After much analysis of traditional arnis movements, he developed the Balintawak system, which focuses on the use of the single stick and the empty hands. Removed from its curriculum are the popular arnis weapon-sets as the double sticks and the stick-and-dagger. Perhaps the most identifiable characteristic of Bacon's Balintawak arnis system is its concentration on close-range fighting tactics, although not at the exclusion of long-range techniques. It was at this time that Bacon developed the *cuentada* method: a gauge of one's mastery of offensive and defensive techniques. A practitioner proves his mastery of the art, not so unlike chess, wherein a series of movements are planned in advance, such that the opponent can only reply with a corresponding set of forced movements or reactions, thus keeping one's opponent under complete control.

Advanced practitioners of the art speak of *cuentada* as the peak of excellence in sparring, as the participant virtually dictates his opponent's movements such that a master can even announce in advance the part of

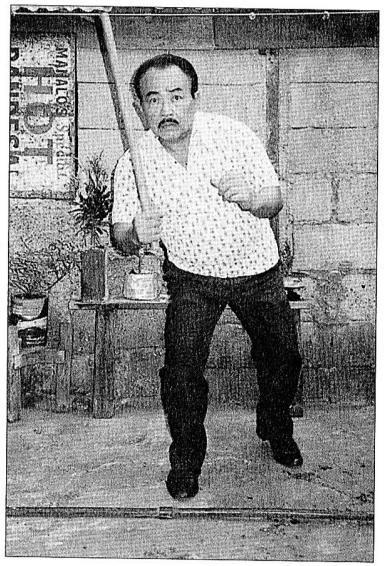
Master Teofilo Velez instructing Taboada

his opponent's body that he will hit. In this particular exercise, Bacon remained unchallenged up to his death. Although in his late seventies, he was precise in his movements and was fondly known by many as the "Mozart of Arnis."

Paying His Dues

At the age of twelve years, Bobby Taboada was introduced to the art of eskrima by his father, Sergio Taboada. Sergio was a practitioner of indangan eskrima, which encompasses the use of the single stick and the stick-and-dagger. Taboada's training consisted of aimlessly twirling his sticks until he effectively blocked his father's on-coming strikes. Needless to say, training was difficult, unorganized, and painful. Sergio believed in training his son the "old fashioned" way: full-powered strikes which had to either be blocked or absorbed on the body. There was little emphasis placed on safety at that time, which was to later have an effect on the way Taboada presented his art to the world. Unmotivated by the impatience of stick-fighters, he turned to Western boxing for the next six years, in addition to dabbling in Shotokan karate, taekwondo, and various systems of kung-fu. Studying imported martial arts was the vogue of the time. Any art which was indigenous to the Philippines was thought to be "inferior." At that time, there was an air of mystery and aristocracy in things foreign.

It wasn't until the age of seventeen that Taboada's interest in arnis was rekindled. After watching a demonstration of Balintawak arnis he immediately joined Teofilo Velez' Balintawak Self-Defense Club. Taboada's interest in arnis, however, did not stem from a political or patriotic roots, but from a pragmatic wish to learn the most effective fighting art he could find. Taboada felt that arnis was indeed effective and utilitarian.

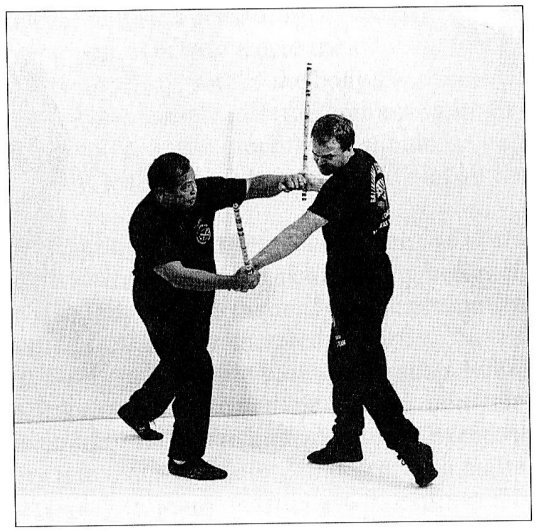


Master Jose Villasin

With nothing but the clothes on his back, Taboada left home to live with Master Teofilo Velez as an adopted son and arnis student. This literally meant sitting at the foot of the master in full obedience and loyalty in search of knowledge and wisdom. It was at this time that Taboada had the rare opportunity to also study directly under Masters Jose Villasin and Tinong Ibanez, and Grandmaster Venancio Bacon. As a fearless and undaunted volunteer for unarmored challenge-matches, Taboada was trained in the practical aspects of the art for combat fighting, not show. This willingness to accept all challenges was perhaps precipitated by the hard training he received under his father, and later, Velez. Although Taboada found the lessons profound, they were brutal as he was the "punching bag" for the masters. It was not uncommon for him to be not only exhausted but bloody at the end of the training sessions. Accepting this training as a mere preparation for the hard lessons of life, Taboada was to go on to be a master of the art and developer of a respected collateral system, known as Balintawak arnis cuentada.

Progressions in Training

Attorney Jose V. Villasin is responsible for initiating safe training methods in the practice of Balintawak arnis. He has always advocated teaching novices in a harmless and methodical way. As a result of safe training,

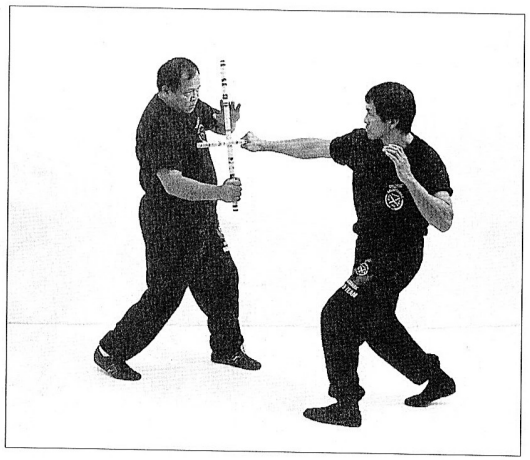


what used to take ten years of training or more is now taught in a shorter length of time.

Villasin divided Balintawak training into two major phases. Phase one includes warm-up exercises and calisthenics for wrist, arms, legs and body, and delivery of blows. The student is then introduced to the fundamentals of the art, including the proper method of holding the stick, proper stance, delivery and defense of the twelve basic blows and thrusts, and recognition of fatal and disabling parts of the human body.

The student is then made to recognize five basic defensive groups of movements against the system's twelve angles of attack, the clearing and lifting of opponent's stick or hand, training the eyes to quickly perceive blows and develop hand-eye coordination, head weaving techniques, development of a supple body to develop reflex control and coordination, precise delivery of counterblows, in addition to supplementary Western boxing punches and parries.

After mastery of the five basic defensive groups, the student proceeds to learn combinations which includes techniques of disarming, butting, pushing, pulling, tripping, sweeping, kneeing, and throwing; then kicking, boxing, hacking, stabbing, karate-like blows, elbowing, and head butting. Upon mastery of the flow of movements with the stick using the basic strikes, the student learns techniques of breaking, holding, grasping, and wrestling. A comprehensive curriculum review is then conducted, coordinating upper and lower body flexibility in relation to handwork, footwork, and the dynamics of balance.



Like other systems of arnis, Balintawak offensive and defensive techniques are based on the use and understanding of twelve angles of attack. Balintawak's twelve angles of attack are delivered as follows: left temple strike, right leg forward; right temple strike, left leg forward; right elbow or hip strike, left leg forward; left elbow or hip strike, right leg forward; solar plexus thrust, left leg forward; right chest thrust, right leg forward; left chest thrust, left leg forward; left knee strike, right leg forward; right knee strike, left leg forward; right eye thrust, right leg forward; left eye thrust, left leg forward; crown of the head strike, left leg forward.

The variety of Balintawak techniques revolve around the use of force-to-force blocks followed by the parrying of the opponent's stick to create a controlling variable. This type of defense leads to either the controlling of the opponent's weapon, using it to strike the opponent's own hand, or block another on-coming strike. While the blocks are done against the force, the parry and/or stick hold is done either with or force-to-force of the blow depending on the desired follow-up technique.

Principal Techniques and Concepts

Phase two of Balintawak arnis is where the *cuentada* concept is learned and mastered. *Cuentada* is a Spanish word that means "to counter." It acknowledges the reality that there is a counter for every technique and that while executing a movement one should anticipate his opponent's response. In a sense, you are "counting" on it and on your ability to "counter" it. Here the student is drilled in the fundamentals of advanced techniques. This is known as planned fighting wherein a fighter by delivering a blow

or thrust or by suggesting a move, invites a retaliatory blow that may be disabling or even fatal to the opponent. It is here where the skilled combatant dictates his blows and predicts on which part of the body the opponent will be hit and how many times. For example, after a probing blow has been initiated and the opponent retaliates, the practitioner should be able to recognize the plethora of options, where and when to attack, and all the subtleties of timing and rhythm.

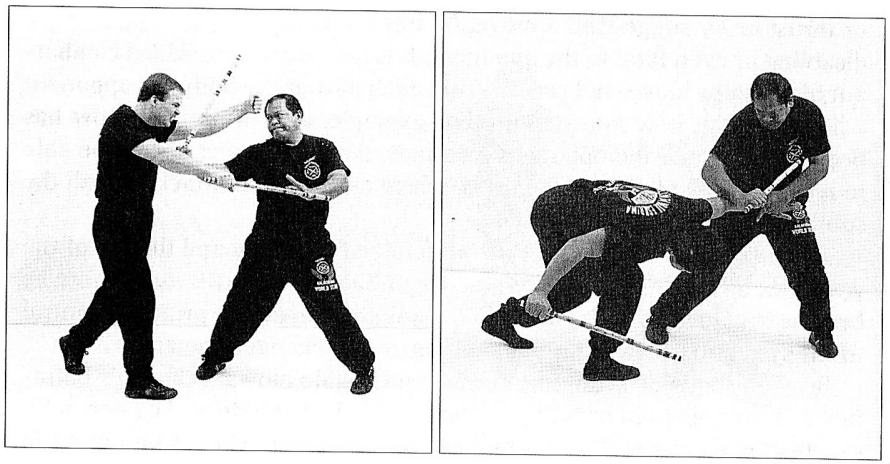
Taboada acknowledges that the principle of *cuentada* and the use of the word was incorporated into the practice of Balintawak arnis long before he became involved with the art. But Taboada has made the principle central to his system in a way that has fundamentally changed the art.

Beneath the wide swinging, flashy, and visible blows, Taboada's Balintawak arnis cuentada uses an array of sophisticated hidden (i.e., non-telegraphed) movements. There is no limit on where and what to hit except in friendly workouts, where injury is avoided and safety imposed. As a matter of fact, what is considered dirty-play in many martial arts is embraced in Balintawak arnis cuentada. Furthermore, the practitioner of Balintawak arnis cuentada is taught that there is a counter to every counter, and that continuous research and discovery is the basis of knowledge and wisdom. Then comes training and workouts, where only those with fast reflexes, coordination, and agility will prevail. This is the practical essence of *cuentada:* tactical awareness, continuous constructive anticipation, and selective follow-through with a conscious and unfolding tactical mind.

To help students attain higher mental and physical levels in *cuentada,* Taboada drills them in *agak* practice, or natural "playing." During *agak* practice, one partner leads or acts (offense) and the other follows or reacts (defense). The aggressor initiates a strike, grab, or feint, and the defender quickly executes a pre-arranged defensive countermove. The aggressor then counters the counter with another attack of choice, the defender responds, and so on.

Cuentada also uses the tactic of "baiting" your opponent. If your opponent is aggressively moving toward you with a stick, you might intentionally expose your head to him. If he takes the bait and initiates a swing, you are ready to exploit the blunder. Your unwitting opponent is being lured into a trap and can be easily and instantly countered and neutralized (e.g., by ducking under the blow, grabbing his arm and striking at the exposed rib area and/or executing a joint lock, disarm, or takedown). Another *cuentada* tactic is to dictate or redirect your aggressor's actions or reactions by using a distracting move, such as grabbing an arm or clothing.

Ability and "style" in *agak* varies from person to person depending on the individual's mental and physical attributes, imagination, and with whom he has trained. Among the Balintawak group members in the Philippines is



the expression, "different players have different hands." For example, Bobby Taboada's sparring partner was Teofilo Velez, who used a hard, abrupt style of training. However, Teofilo's son, Chito Velez, sparred with Jose Villasin, who used a soft, fluid touch when practicing. The style one develops depends on how one learns to adjust to the characteristics and subtleties of his partner's movements.

Returning Home

Bobby Taboada is a long way from the streets of Cebu where he has been personally involved in over thirty fights, some with multiple opponents. He also speaks with gratitude for having been spared from serious injury in any one of his fights. He has been witness to old fashioned "death-matches." Now, he teaches with a soft voice and with a minimum of injury to his students, recalling his own beatings at the hands of brutal junior instructors.

Since 1991, Taboada began the official promotion of his collateral system, Balintawak arnis cuentada. He continues to teach regular classes at the Balintawak International Headquarters in the Charlotte, North Carolina-based Martial Arts Training Center. The Center is run by Irwin Carmichael, who not only assists Taboada in teaching the art at the Justice Academy of Law Enforcement, but is also Taboada's closest friend and student. Taboada is a selective teacher who limits his students to those instructors, black belts, and advanced students from other styles whom he feels have attained maturity, discipline, and the capacity to absorb his skills and techniques. The hard training of his youth has resolved Taboada to

teach his own students with a minimal risk of injury. He knows that few people today would accept the brutal methods of traditional training.

As a result of his exposure to different Balintawak arnis masters, Taboada has learned the history of the Balintawak Club in relation to the other eskrima and arnis clubs in Cebu. In March of 1995, Taboada returned to his hometown of Cebu City, Philippines, where he revisited fellow members of the old club, which has since been renamed Teovel's Balintawak Arnis Club, in honor of Taboada's late instructor, Grandmaster Teofilo Velez. The group is now run by Taboada's *compadres*, all of whom had supported and trained with the late great grandmaster, Anciong Bacon. These men include: Masters Nick Elizar, Monie Velez, Eddie Velez, Ben Jayma, Winnie de la Rosa, Romeo de la Rosa, Teofilo Roma, Hector Rizarri. The club is currently headed by Grandmaster Chito Velez.

To this end, Grandmaster Bobby Taboada speaks with regret and sentimentality that all of the original masters have died and will not see him succeed in promoting Balintawak arnis cuentada beyond the shores of Cebu and to the world.

24

Sam Tendencia

Tendencia Arnis-Hilot

Good martial artists are acutely aware of
the skeletal system of the body.
You have to have a complete knowledge
of how the body is put together
to be an efficient martial artist.
—S. C. TENDENCIA

Introduction

Master Samson C. Tendencia was born in Tigbayan, Iloilo, Philippines, on August 24, 1920. From December 8, 1941 to April 2, 1946 (during the Second World War and the Japanese occupation of the Philippines), Tendencia served as a guerrilla in Panay with Macario Peralta's forces. He eventually became a second lieutenant in the Philippine scouts (United States Armed Forces in the Far East), and organized the "Lancer" division. His wartime exploits earned him the Distinguished Medal of Honor, the American Liberation Medal, and General Douglas MacArthur's Medal of Bravery.

A jolly man of seventy-six years, Tendencia is a master of five disciplines. In Japanese martial arts he holds a 9th Dan in ju-jutsu, a 7th Dan in judo, and a 4th Dan in Shorin-ryu karate; in Filipino arts, he is a master of both arnis and hilot, a Philippine healing tradition. In addition, he earned his bachelors degree in criminology from the Philippine College of Criminology, and his masters degree in physical education from the University of Iloilo.

While Tendencia is not a medical doctor, his healing skills have been

Master Sam Tendencia

sought by many. He has been invited to lecture and teach his craft at chiropractic seminars and sports medicine clinics throughout the United States. In the martial arts world, Tendencia is known as an instructor of Dan Inosanto, and for his skills in disarming, joint-locking, and fighting multiple opponents. I met Master Sam (as his students and patients call him) on three occasions. In 1995, I conducted the proceeding interview, and in 1996, I went to him for treatment of migraine headaches and t.m.j. (commonly called lock-jaw). Two hilot sessions later and my jaw pain was gone. After the second treatment, we practiced arnis in the park, where I also took the accompanying photographs.

An Interview with Sam Tendencia

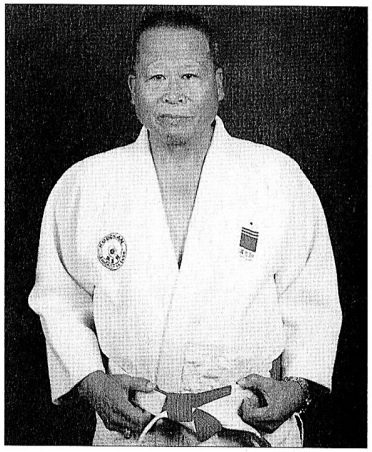
MW : Master Sam, would you please tell me a little about your background in the Filipino martial arts?

ST : I have been doing arnis since I was seven years old. I studied with people in the Philippines. My two instructors in arnis were the best, you know. There was Remondo Gallano of Iloilo, and Deogracias Tipace of Manila. Tipace was the official instructor to the NBI [National Bureau of Investigation]. I studied with them for five years.

MW : What is the basic difference between their styles?

ST : You know, my first arnis instructor, Raymondo Gallano, he teaches both left- and right-handed. If you are left-handed, he teaches left-handed. If you are right-handed, he teaches right-handed. Oh, he's very good.

Gallano used twelve-inch sticks to play what we call the *corto*



Tendencia, judo 7th Dan

mano (close range). Tipace played the *larga mano* (long range), which uses a thirty-inch stick. Then, later on, both masters taught me the *espada y daga,* which uses a short dagger and a twenty-seven inch stick.

During that time there was no control, you know. Every time we finish our practice, my gosh, I am bruised here and there. I have so many black eyes. I was also studying piano at that time. I didn't improve much because my hands were always swollen. So I quite and became more interested in the arnis.

MW : It is known that you are also an accomplished *judoka* (practitioner of judo). Did you learn judo in the Philippines or Japan?

ST : I have a 7th Dan black belt, you know. I was already a black belt in judo in the Philippines when I was fourteen. I was so good that my instructor, Murakami Sensei, sent me to Japan during the summers to train. Then, when I was thirty years old I moved to Japan to continue my training. I became a student of the great Master Kyuzo Mifune at the Kodokan Institute, where I trained from 1950 to 1954. It was there that I learned how to strengthen my neck so nobody can choke me out, and to cut my hair short so nobody can grab it in *randori* (free practice).

Master Mifune liked me so much that he even wanted me to marry his daughter. The first time I met him, I said 'Master, I heard you are good at ping-pong (table tennis).' He replied, 'You know how to play ping-pong?' 'Of course,' I said. He was happy because he now had a partner. From that day on we always played ping-pong during the recess of judo practice. I felt bad, though, because the first time we

played I beat him. He is my senior. So, from that point on, I let him win.

But you know this Mifune, he was the best at judo. One time a wrestler from Greece was sent to Japan to study judo at the Kodokan. Instead he challenged Mifune, who threw him to the ground eight times. The wrestler apologized, but Mifune expelled him for disorderly conduct and lack of respect. There were only two 10th Dan black belts in judo, Mifune and the founder, Jigoro Kano.

MW : Didn't you also study karate while in Japan?

ST : No, after I left Japan I studied Shorin-ryu karate for two years in Naha, Okinawa. I kept up my studies for a while and I am now a 4th Dan black belt. I stopped practicing now because it is too hard on the body. I prefer my Tendencia arnis-hilot because it is a combination of arnis, judo, and hilot.

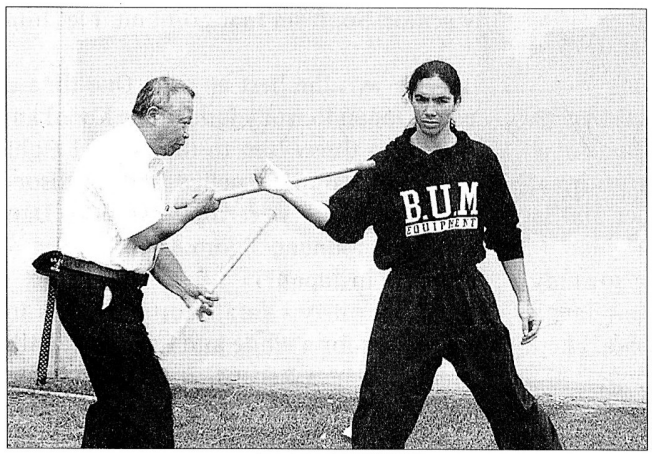
MW : What are some of the characteristics of your system?

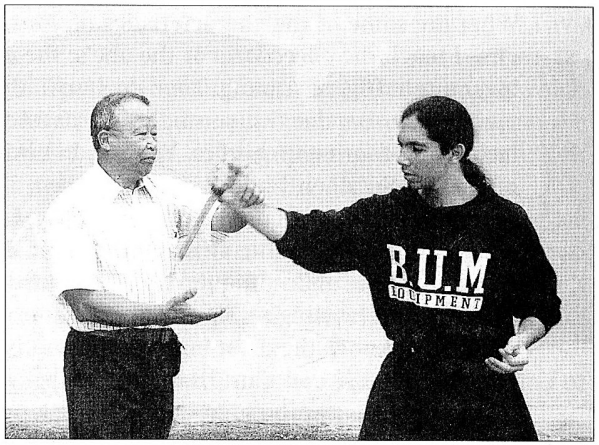
ST : First I teach the *abecedario* or the abc's: the angles of attack, blocking, countering, disarming, hand-to-hand. My masters in the Philippines, they use the twelve angles of attack. I discovered the thirteenth and fourteenth angles. You see, in arnis there is always a pair of strikes. So when I added angle thirteen, I had to also add angle fourteen. Now I am complete in my arnis. I teach the striking and countering combinations in drills. From the *abecedario* you go on to different kinds of techniques like the figure-8, thrusting, hooking, circling, and twirling strikes.

But you know, the most important thing is the disarming and the joint locking. If you can disarm your opponent with or without a weapon that is the best. My style has many locking and choking techniques adopted from judo and ju-jutsu. I have incorporated them effectively within arnis. This helped me to gain entrance as an instructor to the law enforcement agencies in Arizona and California. But, if you know how to hurt somebody, you must also know how to heal them. So, my students also learn the basics of massage and bone-setting.

MW : When did you relocate to the United states, and how did you go about gaining a reputation with the various law enforcement agencies?

ST : I came to the United States in 1969. I worked for Burn's Detention Center in Los Angeles. Then, in 1972, a friend of mind invited me to Tucson, Arizona. I was walking around one day and happened to go into a bar. It was so big and nice inside. I did not see the 'help wanted' sign in the window. The owner turned to me and asked if I was there for the bouncers job. It pays forty dollars and hour, but if

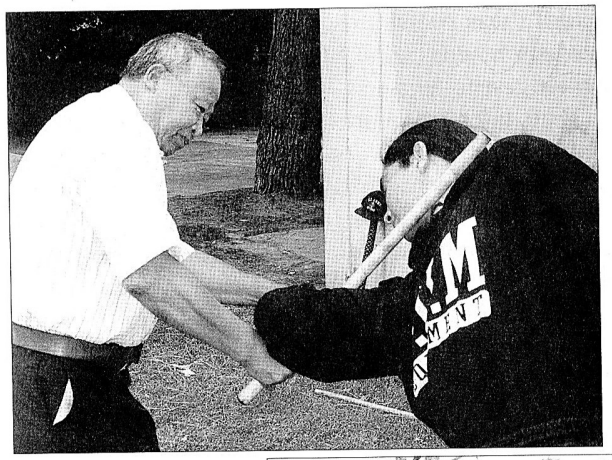


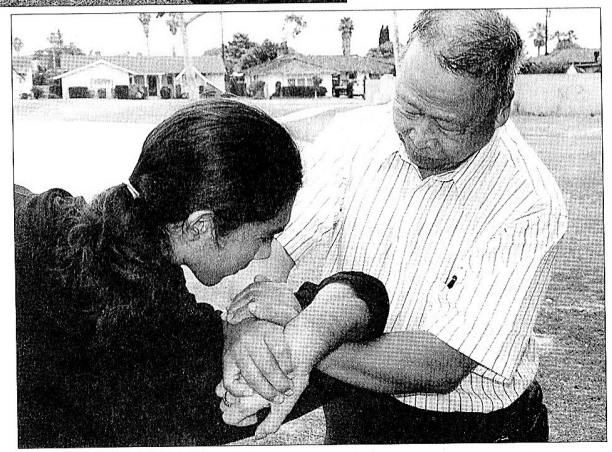


I do martial arts he will pay forty-five dollars. I pulled out my stick; they hired me on the spot.

After one week there was a fight. Three guys came into the club and didn't want to pay. I told the owner to call the police; I knew trouble was inevitable. I asked them nicely two times to please pay. Then I pull out my small stick and asked them to pay again. The big guy swung at me and I hit him on the left and then the right side of his collarbone. I swung at everybody until they were all on the ground.

When the police came and asked what happened, I said they are crazy playing on the ground. The police detective there was also in charge of bodyguard services. I became their baton instructor. I was at the police station the next morning at 9 a.m. sharp. They wanted training on how to hurt the criminal if he attacked you. I gave them





a little bit of a demonstration. I told them to strike me anywhere they wanted and I would defend myself. I was hired on the spot.

The next week, a friend came over from a hard days training. His partner had a cramp in his leg and started yelling. I took off his shoe, pulled on his big toe, and the pain went away. We then became friends. It turns out that he was a member of the SWAT Team. I was only a 5th Dan in judo at the time, but he introduced me to his commander. I gave him a demonstration and he hired me right away. Just imagine that, work all of the time! But, I kept my job at the bar for one more month because they paid my salary in advance.

MW : So you are not only a skilled martial artist, but also an adept healer. What is your background in the Filipino healing tradition of hilot?

ST : The younger you are the better to study the hilot. From when I was

seven years old until I was twelve I used to carry my grandfather's bag of oils everywhere he goes. First I learned the bone-setting because it takes the longest to master. I started with the joints of the fingers and toes. Then, later on, I learned the carpal tunnel and then the elbow, ankle, and knee. The worst is the pelvic joint. Lots of taekwondo people have problems here because they insist on kicking so high all of the time.

After five years my grandfather told me to go my own way. He then told me of some injured people and told me to care for them. So, I go to them and administer the hilot. In Iloilo High School I help friends with injuries who can't afford a hospital. I also learned how to cut hair, so in school I was the barber of my friends and teachers. I always have lots of money, you see. And during that time the hair cut is ten *centavos*. I only charge five *centavos*. I get lots of customers and really know how to make money. But, until now, I am not rich.

MW : What is the basis of hilot? Is it a multiple-components discipline?

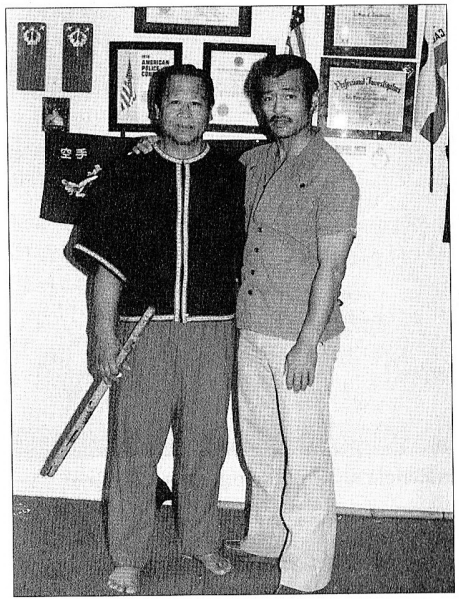
ST : There are different kinds of hilot. Some are midwives, others are psychics who heal through energy. My own specialty is a hands-on healing through bone-setting, nerve, muscle, and joint manipulation, and deep tissue massage.

When I moved back to California from Arizona in 1973, I healed Dan Inosanto. The late Jack Santos is the one who introduced me to Dan. Jack and I were good friends because of my skills in hilot. We also practiced arnis together but I always outwit him. Jack brought Dan to me because he had a problem with a pinched nerve for four years. Can you imagine that: four years and no doctor can help. I cured Dan in three visits. I also taught him arnis, but you know he has so many instructors. Also, the arnis competitor, Eric Knaus, dislocated his right shoulder during a tournament in California. I walked over to him and reset it. He went on to win the match.

MW : While you were in Tokyo, did you study any of the traditional Japanese healing systems?

ST : Yes, I learned shiatsu at a massage school. I also learned the Swedish massage. Once you learn the basics of massage you can improvise. I had lots of patients and soon became an expert in massage—practice makes perfect. The more you do something the more you can discover the techniques, just like in arnis.

I also went to the bone-setting school to learn from them. The day I went to sign up, a fourteen year old boy was there with a hurt shoulder. I fixed him right away. The teacher said that they cannot accept my money because I am already good. So, we just exchanged ideas and techniques.



Tendencia with student Dan Inosanto, *ca.* 1975

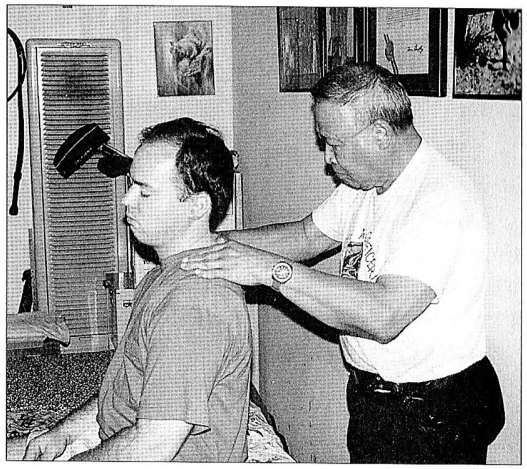
MW : How does hilot differ from Western methods of chiropractic or physical therapy?

ST : What Western medicine seems to be unaware of is that when you sprain an area, there is an internal viscous coating which forms and solidifies. This is why, when we hilot practitioners treat a client, the first thing we do is a deep muscle massage to break the coating. If you don't, the treatment will be a waste of time.

Part of what makes hilot work is the personal touch. Everyone is different. You can't just slap people down on rollers and machines that stretch you out. You have to examine everyone individually and treat them accordingly. My religion is Iglesia ni Kristo. I meditate and pray to God to help me heal. I also wash my hands immediately after a healing treatment so they will not loose their magic.

Anyway, chiropractic is a hustle. There is no massage or bone setting, only popping. I worked for a chiropractor for five years. They have nothing, and make you go for too many visits. They are just out for the money.

I would be embarrassed if I cannot heal your injury in three visits. I normally charge only twenty dollars per visit for three visits. If a person does not believe in hilot, and has gone to a doctor and could not be cured, I have a good deal for them. I tell them that if I can't heal them in three visits, there is no charge. But, if I succeed they



Tendencia healing the author's migraine

will pay double! I have been doing hilot for sixty-five years now, and nobody can outwit me.

MW : It seems that the idea of three treatments is a central theme to hilot therapy. What is the significance of three visits?

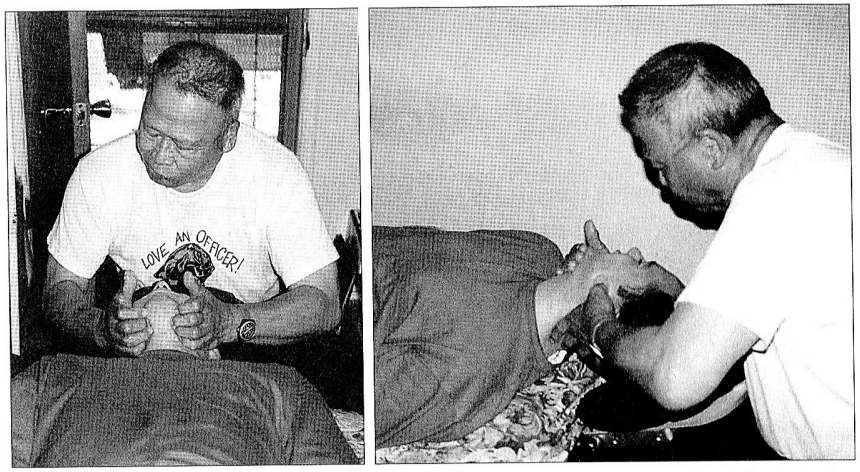
ST : It is vital that the three sessions take place in a row, so the coating of tissue over the injury doesn't reform. The first session is simply to break down the coating around the injured area. The second is where the main treatment takes place. The third session is just to make sure everything is proper again.

MW : How do you think the Western medical community will respond to hilot if exposed to it on a larger scale?

ST : The hilot is no quack! Even in this modern age, with all that progress in the science of medicine, we have no reason to look down on the hilot. In fact, they send me the hard cases, particularly the dentists. people are getting tmj quite often these days. It is because of the double hamburger, you know. People stretch their mouths open too wide to bite into it.

Lots of people want to learn hilot from me. I am now very popular, you know. Even the chiropractic association invited me to their conference. I did not even know them, and I am not even a doctor. They want to learn because they say what I am doing is real chiropractic. I don't think so! They don't even know how to set bones. Even the sports doctors want to learn from me. They don't know how to set bones either, just operate!

I see lots of people going for unnecessary operations, even for



Tendencia healing the author's tmj (lock jaw)

carpal tunnel. The wrist is the problem. But all you have to do is know the proper massage technique to get the blood flowing. I also reset dislocated joints of the wrist and arms. In my massage oils and liniments I use sixteen herbs. The Chinese *dit da jow* has only eight!

MW : You have certainly had an exciting and fulfilling life, Master Sam. Do you have any last words you would like to share with our readers?

ST : You have to have a complete knowledge of how the body is put together to be an efficient martial artist. If a martial artist is truly good, his knowledge of the human body should rival that of the most learned physicians. And that knowledge can be used to put people back together just as easily as it can be used to take them apart.

I really want to retire but I can't because all of these people keep coming here for hilot, or they want to learn arnis, judo, or ju-jutsu, you see. I always move, and that is good exercise. Well, you know, Tendencia arnis-hilot is a complete martial and healing art, and it makes me happy to be alive.

25

Raymond Tobosa

Tobosa Kali/Escrima

No matter how strong you may be,
you cannot break barriers
with strength alone.
—R. TOBOSA

Introduction

In post-World War II Hawaii, immigrants of different ethnic groups were assigned to their respective labor camps. The Filipinos would practice the art of escrima among themselves after work or during weekends and holidays as a form of recreation. A few chosen individuals were given special private instruction during the early morning hours and late at night. The private teachings were generally grueling because the masters believed in hitting the students so they could appreciate the force of the blows. The masters felt that if the students received pain they would try to avoid the strike the next time. This is one reason why few students lasted long in this type of training. The late Grandmaster Raymond Tobosa is one of the few who did persevere, and eventually earned the rank of master and title of *batikan*. In Hawaii today, two of the oldest schools that are earnestly perpetuating the art are the Pedoy School of Escrima and the Tobosa School of Kali/Escrima.

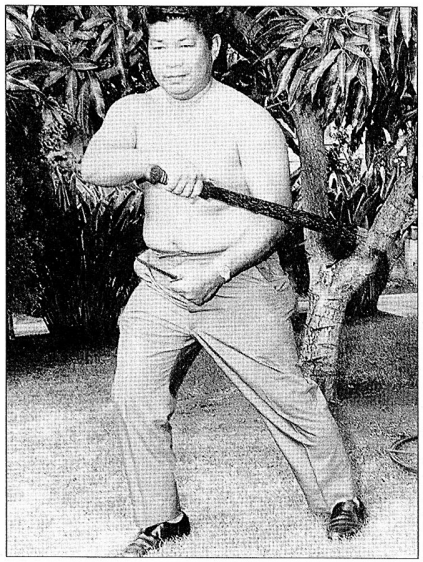
A Varied Background

Raymond Tobosa was first introduced into the martial arts at the age of nine years by his father, Maximo Tobosa. Maximo had learned this art

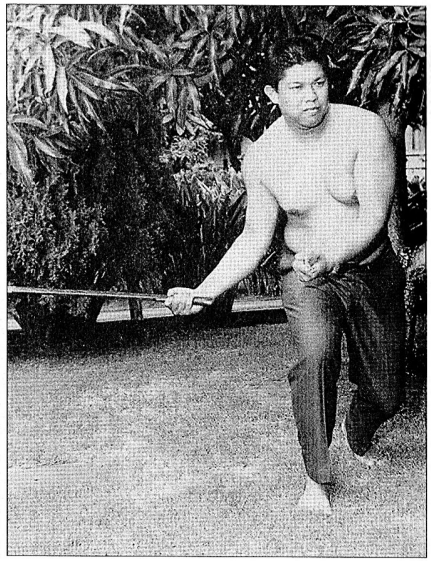
Grandmaster Raymond Tobosa

from his uncle while growing up in the Philippines. They would often go to Mindanao, southern Philippines, traveling through the mountains and villages in search of kali masters. In addition, they would travel to the central Philippine island of Negros in search of escrima masters under whom they could also study. From his father, Raymond learned the basics of both unarmed and armed self-defense. Initially trained in empty-handed striking and disarming techniques, Tobosa's lessons soon advanced to learning the various methods of striking and disarming with the *solo baston* (single stick). During his escrima training sessions Tobosa recalled using rolled up newspapers and magazines in lieu of hard wood or rattan sticks. During actual sparring sessions, however, the center portion of a banana leaf cut to twenty-eight inches in length was utilized.

As a student of the Filipino martial arts, Raymond Tobosa was considered to be one of the few lucky individuals to have been given the privilege and honor of studying under more than one master. During the initial revitalization of escrima and kali the masters were quite secretive with their arts in general, and if they did agree to teach it was usually under the agreement that the student be loyal to one school or style. Tobosa had the rare privilege of studying under five masters: his father Master Maximo Tobosa, Master Atanacio Acosta, Grandmaster Bonifacio Lonzaga, Grand-



Tobosa with *garote* and dagger, 1969



Master Teofisto Tobosa, 1969

master Telesporo Subingsubing, and Grandmaster Floro Villabrille. Regrettably, all of these men have since passed away.

At the age of six years, under the supervision of his father, Tobosa learned cinco tero escrima which is based on the V shape. The system of Maximo Tobosa was characterized by graceful parries and counter attacks, evasive footwork, and quick, sharp hits. However, under the guidance of Master Atanacio Acosta, Tobosa was introduced to a different set of five strikes which were modeled after the X shape. The art of Acosta was known as the "push away" style which was equally effective from both the inside and outside of an opponent's striking arms. Master Acosta asserted that the ultimate defensive posture was one in which the *baston* is held vertically in front of the chest.

While studying under Grandmaster Bonifacio Lonzaga, Tobosa learned the style of hinaplos arnis. Lonzaga's method was characterized by the complimentary twirling of two sticks *(doble kara)* to effect a passive, sliding parry off of an opponent's offensive movements, finishing with a deadly thrust to the midsection. Distancing is an emphasized attribute of the hinaplos style as exemplified in Grandmaster Lonzaga's ability to step back or dodge an offensive blow and counter with his own thrusting maneuver.

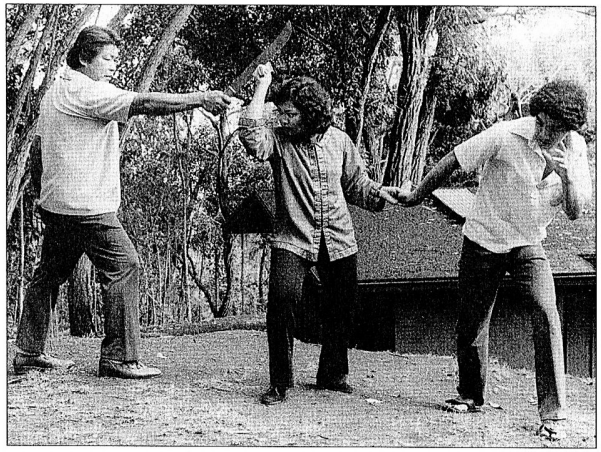
Grandmaster Telesporo Subingsubing taught Tobosa the Moro style of sinayoup kali. Wrist cutting and disabling slashing maneuvers to the tricep muscles and stomach are the hallmark of Subingsubing's style. Unique to

the Moro style of Telesporo was the training of walking on a sixteen foot bamboo pole of about four-inches in diameter. This may not seem difficult, however, while walking on this pole Subingsubing would perform the various offensive and defensive movements found in his system. Of particular interest to Tobosa was Grandmaster Telesporo's ability to stare for extended periods of time without blinking an eye. A definite advantage to him when engaging an opponent in a match, for it is said the one who blinks first will loose.

In his analysis of his teachers, Tobosa stated: "Of the top instructors that I learned the Filipino martial arts of kali and eskrima, Grandmaster Villabrille stands out as the one most knowledgeable of the English language to communicate his thoughts and ideas to me." Remembering his other instructors, Tobosa recalled them as perpetuating a method of teaching that was rooted in observation more than explanation. "The others in their own way taught by hitting me on a particular spot making me feel the pain, and *then* telling me to defend myself. Then I would try to hit them and they defended against my blows. By doing this, I could watch their defensive movements and learn." Of all Tobosa's masters it was the late Grandmaster Floro Villabrille who was said to have had the most flamboyant movements. It was on the island of Kauai that Raymond and his brother Teofisto "Toby" Tobosa began their study under Grandmaster Villabrille in 1967. Much of their time was also spent engaged in intense conversations with the late Grandmaster on the underlying philosophy and principles of kali.

Aside from his pursuit of kali and escrima, Tobosa studied and became proficient in a number of other martial art including Western boxing, judo, kara-ho kempo, tai chi chuan, and Kyokushin-kai karate. Of particular interest to Tobosa was the boxing training he received from Esabello Cuba, a former boxing champion of the Hawaiian sugar plantation camps. In particular, Raymond was taught the finer points of offensive punching and defensive parrying skills. In addition, an understanding of the importance and proper methods of generating sufficient power behind individual strikes was emphasized during his lessons. According to Tobosa, "The most important thing that I learned from Esabello Cuba was the ability to slide under punches and counter with my own punches–the ability to 'ride' the blows of my opponent."

During World War II Tobosa began the study of judo under the late Richard Takamoto, son-in-law of the late Henry Okazaki Sensei. While involved in judo he was taught the techniques of *yawara no kata* (hand techniques), *nage no kata* (throwing), and *oku no kata* (take-downs with locks, arm-bars, and chokes). Concurrent with his study of judo came instruction in the methods of massage. From his study of judo, Tobosa went on to study kempo karate under Fred Lara, a student of the late Professor William K. Chow, as well as with Thomas Young. Both Chow and Young



Raymond Tobosa, Josephine Del Mar, and Mike Young

were students of the late James Mitose. In that Tobosa and Fred Lara were neighbors, they would often exchange their respective knowledge on the arts of Filipino escrima and Chinese-American kempo.

After developing sufficient skills in the physical aspects of the martial arts Tobosa felt a void in the development of his inner, more spiritual, dimensions. From Sifu Lee Tin Chan, the oldest tai chi exponent of that time living on Hawaii, he was taught various methods for developing internal energy. "Lee taught me the proper art of breathing and expansion of breath," Remembered Tobosa. "He taught me that in tai chi a person builds up energy, whereas in the other martial arts energy is used up." Conversely, Tobosa studied the hard-hitting style of Kyokushin-kai karate from the arts founder, Masutatsu "Mas" Oyama. Oyama emphasized to Tobosa the necessity to practice the exercise known as *san ban*. "He told me if nothing else to practice this as much as I could, for in it was the timing and movement that was very important in karate."

In 1958, Tobosa founded the Tobosa kaji-kumi style of karate. As with the masters before him, Tobosa did not want to teach the Filipino martial arts to the general public—he revered them as being too sacred and deadly. Rather, he started teaching the kaji-kumi style of self-defense to a mere five students. In wanting to maintain the essence and integrity of the martial arts, Tobosa chose to close his class enrollment when he had reached twenty students. In fact, the only time he would accept a new pupil into the class was when one of the twenty had discontinued his or her training. When, and if, Tobosa decided to consider a new pupil he would conduct a thorough screening to determine the character, humbleness, integrity, perse-

verance, and patience of the perspective pupil. Tobosa was known to be very strict when it came to the adherence of rules and regulations, proper application of techniques, stances, and postures. It wasn't until 1973 that Tobosa decided to openly teaching his Tobosa system of kali/escrima.

Grandmaster Tobosa then opened the Tobosa School of Kali/Escrima to replace the previously existing Kaji-Kumi School of Self-Defense. The foundation of Tobosa's *casag* style was taught to Tobosa by his father. The striking sequences and their respective defenses are based on the sets of five strikes called *cinco tero,* and the twelve strikes known as the *doce tero.* Evasive moves are used to maneuver the exponent of Tobosa kali/escrima to the blind side of an opponent. From here, sharp hits to the leg and arm joints are utilized in an effort to quickly end a confrontation.

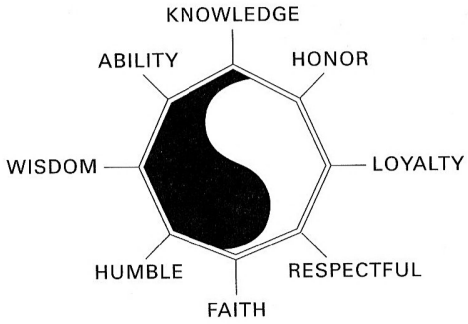
On Character Development

Most Southeast Asian martial arts are spiritual in orientation. The Filipino arts are no exception, as the Filipinos hold many beliefs and perform many rituals on a scheduled basis. Raymond Tobosa was a spiritual man like many of his teachers. Although he did not push religion on his students, he did instill in them a sense of purpose and meaning. He molded their character through hard training, a code of honor, and philosophical ideals. The core philosophy of the Tobosa kali/escrima system is based on an understanding of the characteristics of the bamboo plant. Bamboo cannot be uprooted once it establishes itself in the ground. It will bend with the strongest wind and straighten up after the wind has subsided. The bamboo stands straight, tall, and true. It is very hard in composition, yet flexible in structure. Split it, and it will split in a straight line without deviating. Pick up one of the halves and you will find the edges sharp enough to cut. It is hallow between joints, but it can contain something—you can use it to hold water and drink from it. When applied to martial arts and daily life the lessons of the bamboo plant are many. The hollow spaces between the bamboo joints is associated with one's ability to still the mind, making room for more knowledge. There are many spacers or areas in your mind to fill with new ventures and experiences.

"In the martial arts," stated Tobosa, "I did not want to do something that most people knew. The reason being, many books were published on the various martial arts. This meant that people would buy the books and teach themselves. If these people learned eight techniques from the book for a particular defensive or offensive movement, I wanted our students to know ten or twelve techniques." This is an example of a practical application of the fifth principle of the kaji-kumi's five S's: surprise—the others being strength, stamina, skill, and speed.

Tobosa believed that one must not go against an adversary's force, but use his strength and speed to work against him. "In our everyday life's problems," he taught, "you must find solutions, not to avoid the conflict, grumble, and run away from it. You cannot run from your personal problems for they will follow you wherever you go. So solve it the best way you can. Be humble, honest, and true in all your dealings with people. Have a reputation so that people will say that, 'Your word is as good as gold,' or 'your word is your bond.' Once you have decided to do something follow it to the end, otherwise, don't start it. Be sharp in your dealings, but do not step on the toes of others or take advantage."

As part of their formal training and testing requirements Tobosa's students were required to commit to memory the code and creed of kaji-kumi.



The code uses the word "karate" as an acronym when beginning each phrase. The code states that the disciple should be *knightly* in nature, *artistic* in movement, have *reflexes* sharp as a razor, *agility* second to the cat, to be *tactful* in manner of speech, and should show *ease* in execution of forms. The creed states that knowledge and wisdom are gained through concerted effort and hard training; that proper attitudes are possessed through respectfulness and obedience; that one should remember happiness is not the end-all to life; that character is of great importance; that truthfulness in the art of karate is essential; and that one should always be ready to aid those who are in need. Above all, these codes were taught to aid the students in seeking and training their mind and body to obey their will, and to seek and adjust themselves to every condition, good or bad, which they may meet in their daily life.

The Tobosa kali/escrima system has a set of eight tenets that are required for the students to memorize and take to heart. Tobosa believed that since most people did not fight on a daily basis they should be more concerned with how they interacted with those around them. By being always polite and respectful one will lessen the chances of evoking negative thoughts from another that would ignite a physical confrontation. Tobosa taught that strength alone does not make an *escrimador.* The following tenants of Tobosa kali/escrima system are aids in further developing its students internal fortitude and strength of character and will: Knowledge: Knowledge is power. Words are sometimes more powerful than the fist. Increase your knowledge; Faith: Having an unquestioning and complete trust or confidence in what you believe in; Loyalty: Do not neglect your duties to your family and your country, at home or away, socially and religiously; Wisdom: Show your wisdom by using sound judgment in your actions, deeds, and decisions; Ability: Be prepared with your abilities in all your undertakings—It is gained through concentrated effort and training; Honor: One

who lies and cheats has no honor. Uphold your honor by being honest; Respect: Show respect and you will be respected. Be respectful especially to your parents, elders, and superiors; Humility: Be not a braggart or show-off, but be modest and humble in mind.

Symbolism and Rank

In following his philosophical roots, on June 05, 1975, Tobosa established the following classification of rank within his kali/escrima system. The first rank is symbolized by the carabao (water buffalo) with a minimum time-in-grade of seventy-eight hours. The mission of the practitioner at this level is to be industrious as signified by hardwork. The second rank is symbolized by the *kawayan* (bamboo) which requires 156 hours of time-in-grade to achieve. The mission of the *kawayan* student is to possess humbleness, so classified by a mentally and physically strong person, yet one who is capable of bending should the situation warrant it. *Talarih manok* (gamecock) is the symbol of the third level, with a time-in-grade of 234 hours. Gameness is the mission of the practitioner which implies that one be confident, wise, and unafraid. He must know the power of kali/escrima and vows to use it only as a defensive measure. Level four is ranked as *humay* (rice) and holds a time-in-rank of 624 hours of training. The mission of this level is perpetuity. The pupil is now a qualified instructor so classified by his ability to now perpetuate the art (much like planting rice) to others who are interested in kali/escrima. The fifth rank is *owak* (crow) with a time-in-grade of 832 hours. The instructor of this level strives to be as a peddler which is classified by his promotions of the art. The instructor at this level must expound the values of the art in its cultural aspects as well as its defensive potentials. Level six is the rank symbolized by the *agila* (eagle) with a minimum time being 1,040 hours to achieve this. The mission of the level is of being an advocator. This is classified by being very proficient and skillful in the art. The instructor of this level must advocate the teaching of kali/escrima and see that the art is taught correctly just as it was originally learned. The final level of Tobosa kali/escrima is known as and symbolized by *hangin* (wind) which requires a time-in-grade of 2,600 hours. The mission is to be a revelator. As this rank associates one as the head of his own school, he must be of high character, wise in most things, inspired, and sage-like in many ways.

Honoring His Masters

To honor his masters, the late Raymond Tobosa founded the United Pilipino Martial Arts Association of Hawaii (UPMAAH) on February 16, 1980. In

Frank Mamalias, Toby Tobosa, Floro Villabrille, Raymond Tobosa, 1968

attendance at the official meeting and start of the UPMAAH were the late grandmasters Floro Villabrille and Braulio Pedoy, as well as masters Teofisto Tobosa, Frank Mamalias, Snookie Sanchez, Rudy Orlando, Matt Ihara, and Esmile Espaniola. This marked the first time in the history of Hawaii that the masters of the various Filipino martial arts gathered for a common cause. Perhaps these men saw a special gleam in the character of Tobosa that led them to openly teach him, knowing fully well that he was studying under the others. In fact, many masters sought him to be their student.

One cannot hold short the efforts of the late Raymond Tobosa to perpetuate and actualize the ideals of kali/escrima. Through his efforts in uniting the masters on Hawaii to his kali/escrima demonstration team performing around the mainland United States, Tobosa will be remembered as a man of great vision, character, and respect. A letter from Ben T. Largusa, the heir apparent of the Villabrille system of kali, in regard to Tobosa's formation of the UPMAAH, sums up his efforts in this way: "This significant occasion marks another of Grandmaster Villabrille's dreams becoming a reality. This reality, like the 'flame symbol of growth,' can only grow stronger with your constructive contributions and personal efforts. It's lasting glow will be cherished by your discipline, loyalty, harmony, and dedication. Your real strength lies not in promoting your idea; but in supporting another's idea, concurred and accepted by the majority of the group for the benefit of all."

On July 19, 1990, Grandmaster Raymond Tobosa passed away from diabetes and kidney failure. He left his legacy to his brother, Master Teofisto "Toby" Tobosa. Toby is currently living in Pearl City, Hawaii, and is actively promoting the arts of his Filipino heritage.

26

Florendo Visitacion

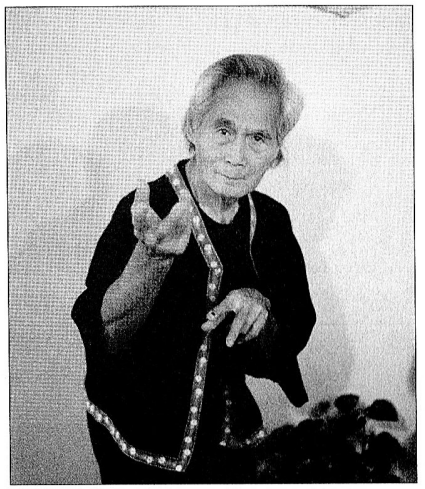
Vee Arnis Jitsu

There is no such thing as a better martial art,
just better practitioners.
I became a better practitioner
as a result of my studies.
—F. M. VISITACION

Introduction

To martial arts practitioners coming of age during the explosion of the arts in the United States during the 1970s, the name Professor Florendo M. Visitacion needs no introduction. Visitacion is at once an icon of the eclectic martial artists and one of the major contributors to the spread of arnis and ju-jutsu throughout the country. Although grounded in Filipino martial arts, Florendo Visitacion is best known for his activity among Japanese ju-jutsu practitioners and is often associated with them. Visitacion possesses the rare qualities necessary to develop his mind and skills beyond the scope of any single martial or philosophical tradition. Following his lead, many of Visitacion's senior students, such as the well-known Moses Powell, have branched off and developed systems of their own. Visitacion is not one to fuss over such things as losing students and lives his life in the moment, experiencing new styles, traditions, and ways of life. This attitude has left a general air of confusion surrounding the public's understanding and appreciation of his Vee arnis jitsu system. Thus, it is hoped that this article will shed some light on the man behind the scenes and the art in center stage.

Professor Florendo M. Visitacion



A Foundation in Filipino Martial Arts

Born in Ilocos Norte, Philippines, in 1910, Florendo Visitacion began learning self-defense at an early age under the supervision of his brother, Marcos, and his neighbors. He does not remember exactly which Filipino martial arts he studied although he remembers the training to consist of both weapon and empty hand components. At that time he held little interest in the arts but felt an obligation to practice out of the respect he held for his elders. However, after an altercation which left him responsible for taking down an older boy by twisting his head, Visitacion began to see the virtues of his lessons. It wasn't until a second altercation at the age of ten, which left him frightened beyond belief when an older boy pulled a knife on him, that Visitacion seriously pursued his cultural fighting arts.

In 1926, the sixteen year old Visitacion left the Philippines for the Hawaiian Islands. This was the last time he was to see his family. For the next two years Visitacion continued his study of martial arts, Filipino and otherwise, from any source that was available. In 1928, he moved to Stockton, California where he worked as a laborer in the grape fields.

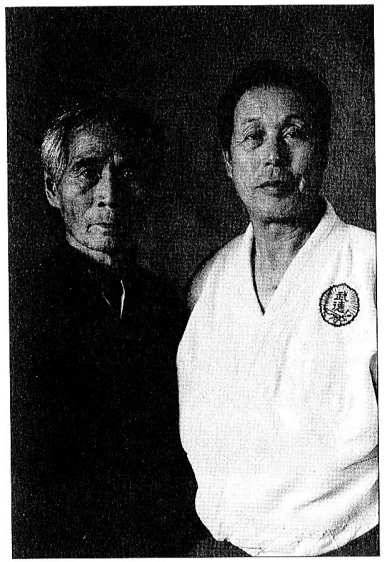
It was in Stockton, the one-time hub of Filipino martial arts in America, that Visitacion studied eskrima knife fighting concepts and arnis single stick techniques. Visitacion recalled his practice sessions after work as being held in private and available to none other than Filipinos. After spending a decade in Stockton, Professor Vee (as he is known) traveled around California residing with Filipino families in San Francisco, Sacramento, and Pasadena, until enlisting in the United States Army at the onset of World War II.

Visitacion instructing Moses Powell

Mixing Martial Arts

The war played an important role in the development of Visitacion's style, for it was during this time that he became intrigued by an officer's hand-to-hand combat manual which claimed to present a combination of styles from different countries. The idea of synthesizing techniques and concepts from different sources led Visitacion to research—and compete against—as many martial arts as possible to further evolve his own system. While in the Army, Visitacion seriously pursued boxing and wrestling and would often engage the other enlisted men in competition.

In 1950, Visitacion relocated to New York and continued his research through the study of self-defense under Charles Nelson, modern ju-jitsu under Professor Kiyose Nakae, judo under Jerome Mackey, and Indian varmannie under Swami Vraygiananda. He also began to structure his art and teach it to judo and ju-jitsu practitioners. Not knowing how to classify his eclectic fighting art, and realizing that the Filipino martial arts were virtually unknown in the United States, on September 5, 1955 Professor Vee termed his style Vee-jitsu. It was now that the confusion surrounding his art began. Visitacion never intended his style to be classified as a Japanese martial art. Rather, as a point of reference based on the popularity of judo and ju-jutsu at the time, he adopted the Japanese suffix *"jitsu"* (or *jutsu)* to its name. And so, Vee-jitsu, as literally translated, means "the art of Vee," and at the time had little to do with Japanese martial arts.



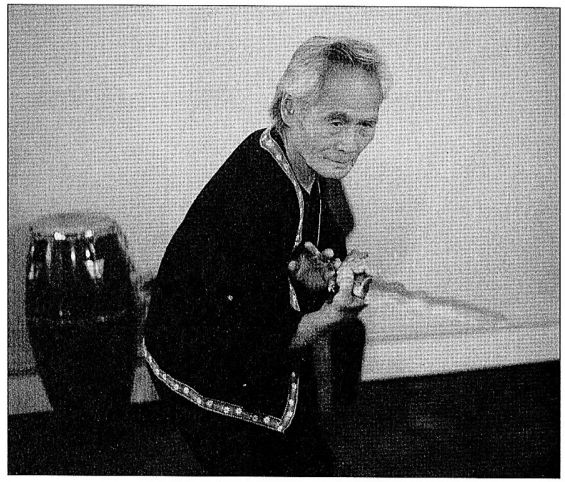
Professor Vee and Professor Wally Jay

Developing the Systems

Through Visitacion's association with these Japanese martial artists he was introduced to the American Judo and Jujitsu Federation (AJJF) in 1960. Shortly thereafter he traveled back to California to attend an AJJF conference where he befriended Wally Jay, the developer of small circle ju-jitsu, and the late Raymond Tobosa. Professor Vee spent a great deal of time at the conference training and exchanging ideas with these masters. Visitacion was appointed as the northeastern division director of the AJJF and at the suggestion of Tobosa, began training in arnis Lanada under Amante Mariñas.

In 1965, with the further evolution of the Visitacion style, Professor Vee founded Vee-jitsu '65, an updated and much improved version of Vee-jitsu '55. On February 26, 1966 Professor Visitacion presented his art to the American Judo and Jujitsu Federation for recognition as a legitimate martial art. He was then conferred the title of Professor and was awarded the rank of 10th Dan in his art of Vee-jitsu. Visitacion later resigned from the AJJF because he felt that its members neglected to go beyond their existing techniques to improve their arts. Vee, however, continued his cross training with the study of karate under Lou Angel, southern praying mantis kung-fu under Gin Foon Mark, tai chi chuan under C. K. Chu, and wing chun and pa kua in New York's Chinatown.

During his ten years of study under Mariñas, Visitacion was introduced to Leo T. Gaje, Jr. of the pekiti tirsia kali system. This supplementary train-

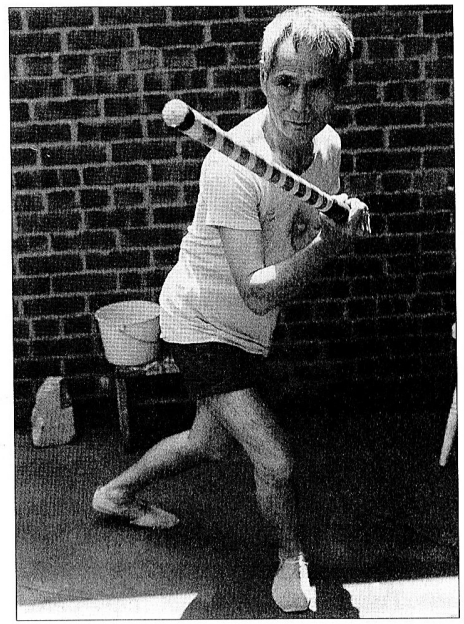


ing added to Vee-jitsu '65 and, with the inclusion of karate *katas* and advanced kenpo karate theories (which he studied from books), Professor Vee changed the name of his system to Veejitsu-te. On August 26, 1978, as a result of further study of his native Filipino arts, Visitacion was awarded the title of *datu* (chief instructor) by *Tuhan* (grandmaster) Gaje through the Arnis America Organization. In 1983 he was also awarded an instructor's rank in arnis Lanada under Mariñas. This led Vee to drop the *katas* of Veejitsu-te in favor of the principal movements inherent in arnis. Once again Visitacion changed the name of his system, this time to Vee arnis jistu, a Filipino/Japanese/American martial art. Interestingly, on September 6, 1986 Florendo Visitacion was inducted into the American Jujitsu Black Belt Hall of Fame.

After various name changes such as Veejitsu-ryu jujitsu, Visitacion-ryu jujitsu, and Visitacion kuntao-arnis, Professor Vee felt that he would maintain the identity of his art at three integral stages in its development. Visitacion has appointed four disciples to oversee the perpetuation of his "System of Systems." Roberto Torres has been appointed as the successor to Veejitsu-te, Frank Edwards, Sr. and Frank Edwards, Jr. have been appointed to oversee Vee arnis, and David James is heir to Vee arnis jitsu.

Philosophical Root

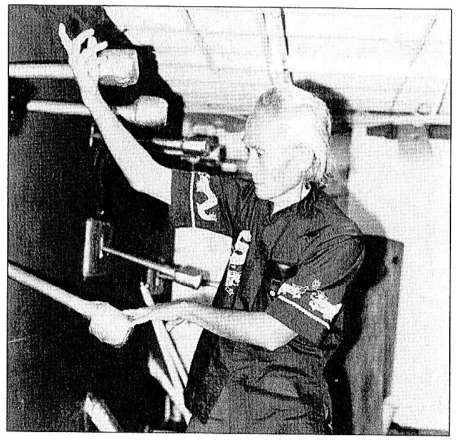
Florendo Visitacion stresses that it isn't the name of his art that is important, but its evolutionary process. Vee arnis jitsu, the combined weapon and empty hand art, is the result of Vee's progression from Vee-jitsu until



the present. "Vee arnis jitsu goes beyond the techniques of the preceding arts," states Professor Vee. "There is no such thing as a better martial art just better practitioners. I became a better practitioner as a result of my studies and my current system reflects that progress."

Visitacion asserts that all martial arts are the same and draws a parallel with music. "The martial arts is like music: There are only seven notes but how many songs and kinds of music are there in the world? Millions. You could compose any good music. I respect all the different arts because they are all music in a sense. Like different compositions, the body has the same vital points, or notes. Some arts may be only focusing on the upper part of the body, some may specialize on kicking, or some specialize on holding or locking. In our system we combine them all. It is eclectic. So, if it's music, then our system maybe has a little bit of Latino, American, or whatever you can think of." The eclectic nature of Vee arnis jitsu is best seen through Visitacion's unique training methods and apparatuses and his application of techniques in sparring practice.

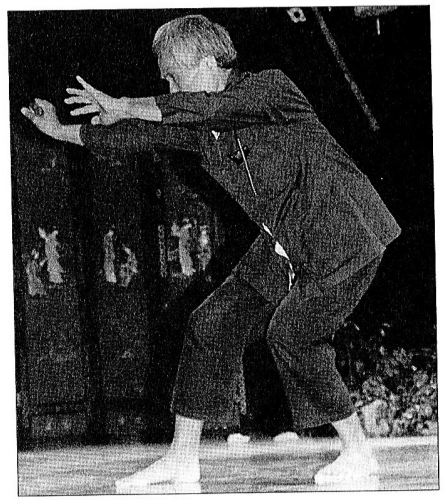
With regard to such martial customs as bowing Visitacion believes that different cultures are reflected in the martial arts. "In Japan," states Visitacion, "they make it like a religion to bow and respect [the instructor] like a God. Because I study the Eastern and Western philosophies and religions I believe that as a human being we should respect one another whether a beginner in the martial arts or a master. In the Japanese martial arts you



bow like you are worshipping your master. Over here its just a little bit of a salute. It is like you are equal to the other person, not to impress or suggesting that they must look at you like the God of the society of martial arts. People put too much importance on the titles." Visitacion is known for his sincerity, and for respecting everybody he meets as equal. "If I meet a master I am able to level up," he continues, "but when I talk to a beginner I level down. I don't try to impress because although the person you are talking to may be a beginner in the martial arts he may also be a professional doctor or college professor. I respect all people regardless of whatever they have or I have."

Visitacion equates the social structure of martial arts as akin to one big family. In any given family you may find individuals of varying religious and ethnic backgrounds living together harmoniously. Visitacion is frequently heard encouraging his students to study more than one martial art. In fact, he is often found tinkering with new ideas based on such colorful arts as Brazilian capoeira. "Like all of them," notes Professor Vee, "I may not be familiar with their techniques or compositions but they are all in the same category of martial fighting arts."

As with his martial arts philosophy, and so his religious. Visitacion states that although there are many different religions in this world, they all teach the same precept of looking toward a God or God-like figure for guidance. "I am what I call non-sectarian," asserts the Professor. "I respect different denominations because I know that each one of them teaches love which is the most important part of life. There is a saying in the *Holy Bible:* 'Love thy Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thy self.' I think that is the end of the law. You don't worry about 'I am this, I am that.' Any martial artists that I meet whether they are Buddhist, Confu-



cianist, Taoist, Christian, or many others, as long as they respect me and practice the ethical, moral, spiritual, and physical ideals, these are the main things. I respect their own talent like you respect other songs from other countries. Its just music. They have their melody and we have ours. But of course you have your own choice, like you have your own choice of food. Maybe you just like more chicken than me."

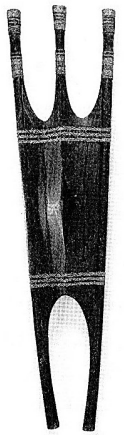
Essential Principles

Professor Visitacion has developed the unusual ability to comprehend and find a weakness in even the most complicated of techniques originating from arts he has never seen before. He has also developed the ability to demonstrate an improved version of that very technique on the spot if asked to do so. Such talent could not have been acquired if it were not for his dedication and scientific analysis of so many martial art forms over the past half-century. Through his research, Visitacion devised four guidelines to assist instructors attempting to dissect and transcend their existing technique. He asked that they be presented here to aid anyone who wants to improve his current self-defense ability by examining other martial arts.

First, understand the basic technique as drawn from the parent art. Second, go beyond the original technique without discarding it or denying its usefulness. Third, find ways to apply the new technique in a variety of offensive and defensive ways. Fourth, relate the original technique to principles from other arts you have studied to suggest ideas for further application and variations.

PART FIVE

Summary and Conclusions



27

The Classification and Ethos of Filipino Martial Traditions

In all human experience there is this confrontation between public cultural forms and socially informed but individually reconstructed knowledge and intuition.

—ROBERT W. HEFNER

Introduction

Researchers investigating martial culture in India, China, and Japan usually analyze family-owned manuscripts (India), classical texts (China) and *densho* transmission-scrolls (Japan), in order to determine the nature and evolution of various martial practices and techniques. This is a task requiring many years work even if confined to specific texts or particular time periods in history. Unfortunately, as the martial arts later spread into Southeast Asia the use of such "recorded documents" disappeared. It is unclear as to why this happened. One may speculate that this may have had something to do with the destruction extending from many invasions in this area (e.g., the Spanish invasion of the Philippines and the subsequent destruction and burning of records, writings, and other cultural artifacts).

As a result, researchers attempting to explore Filipino martial culture may be frustrated by the lack of written documentation to support their investigations. Moreover, the books that the practitioners have written are themselves often transcribed oral history. Much of the information contained in such books is indicative of the characteristic weaknesses of oral historiography: historical dates are often inaccurate; legends are taken at face value; exaggerated claims are made concerning an individual's mar-

tial prowess; and the heroic feats of culture-heroes are taken as fact and now recorded in the written word as if they are true. Conversely, through the transmission of oral history one can learn many things: intimate details about a master's life-history; "rites of passage" involved in martial arts training; and the actual events surrounding challenge-matches in contemporary Filipino society, thus dispelling the perpetuation of recent myths.

For these reasons oral historiography is considered a legitimate method of inquiry in researching various aspects of Filipino culture today.[1] Demetrio's position on this is well taken: "oral tradition is concerned not with authorship or the fact. . . . Most of the time what is handed down as tradition has no author, nor can it be fully established as 'fact' always. Yet the fact that a story, a proverb, a myth is handed down either orally or in writing, whether in its entirety or in part, argues for its value and importance for both the tradition bearers and receivers."[2]

To illustrate this point even further one may consider the myth associated with Lapulapu with respect to the origin of Filipino martial arts. To consider this creation myth in general, one must consider the position taken by most martial arts practitioners in tracing the origins of their systems. To begin, many martial arts practitioners purport to trace the origins of their systems back to Bodhidharma despite high quality scholarship indicating that there is no connection.[3] Related more specifically to a single system of martial arts, many practitioners of tai chi chuan identify its originator as Chang San-feng, again despite evidence to the contrary.[4] A similar parallel is found in the Filipino martial arts tradition with attempts of Christianized Filipino masters to trace the lineage of their respective martial systems to Lapulapu. Lapulapu became the first national hero of the Philippines for repelling the Spanish *conquistadors* whose religion and language many of these masters currently embrace. In addition, since the historical legitimacy of *Maragtas* has been disproven, its account of the Bothoan school of martial arts is, therefore, also untrue.

However, while the connection between Lapulapu, the Bothoan, and these masters' respective martial arts is historically unfounded, their belief in this connection is of great importance. From an anthropologically perspective, the historical accuracy of these accounts is less important than what these practitioners believe and why. It is precisely these creation myths which provide the martial arts practitioner with a sense of meaning, identity, and orientation to world historical events in general. To this end, Rosaldo suggests that the researcher "can learn much about meaningful action by listening to storytellers as they depict their own lives."[5]

For the reasons noted above, the purpose of my research has been to classify Filipino martial arts and explore the ethos of Filipino martial culture by deriving information directly from the contemporary masters who

have maintained an oral transmission of information concerning the evolution and development of their respective martial arts systems.

Classification of Filipino Martial Arts

A common misconception with respect to Filipino martial arts is that there is only one indigenous martial art in the Philippines (i.e., kali). Many contemporary instructors and writers assert that the respective terms for the martial arts of kali, eskrima, and arnis (among a shopping list of others) are synonymous and represent one single martial art form.[6] (This problem is confounded by the fact that instructors of the various arts tend to change the names of their systems from arnis to kali to eskrima, for example, whenever a specific term becomes more popular than anther.) Others claim that the latter two arts are but mere "phases" of kali, the so-called "mother art" of the Philippines.[7] Contrary to common beliefs, this is simply not the case.

Since Indonesian pencak-silat and Malaysian langka-silat predate Filipino kali as martial arts in the Philippines, one naturally concludes that kali cannot be the "mother art" of the Philippines as so many writers suggest. Are we to assume that the hypothesis classifying eskrima and arnis as "phases" of kali holds water just because they evolved from the latter art? If so, would it not follow, then, that the art of kali is but a "phase" of silat, its precursor? If this classification is to be used then it would also follow that silat is at once the "mother art" and only "complete" martial art in the Philippines. Such a contention is at once naive and absurd.

This classification theory is further refuted when one considers the vast number of indigenous grappling arts that survive to this day among various indigenous tribal and ethnic groups in the Philippines. Tribes such as the Ifugao, Samal, Igorot, Ibanag, Manobo, Dumagat, and Maranao practice grappling arts known respectively as bultong, silaga, dama, garong, buteng, purgos, and kapulubod. Various ethnic groups such as the Tagalog, Ilokano, Cebuano, Bicolano, Pampanga, and Pangasinan, practice grappling arts known as gabbo, layung, lampugan, pantok, balsakan, and dumog respectively.[8] Any attempt to categorize these indigenous grappling arts as one and the same based on their shared unarmed grappling characteristic would do much to deny the Filipino his inherited right of autonomous tribal/ethnic expression. In addition, these grappling arts were practiced in the Philippines prior the spread of the Indonesian and Malaysian silat systems. Therefore, they cannot be a "phase" of kali—an art grounded in the techniques of silat and structured around the use of bladed weapons.

The theory of a single indigenous Filipino martial art is further disproved in its apparent dismissal of the practice of martial arts transplanted

and maintained in whole from other Asian countries (e.g., the practice of Chinese kun-tao and Indonesian and Malaysian silat systems by the Samal and Tausug tribes of the Southern Philippines). Furthermore, the contemporary empty-hand systems of sikaran, yaw-yan, sagasa, and hagibis, for example, belong to neither of the weapons-based system classifications of kali, eskrima, or arnis, nor are they related to kun-tao or silat. It is not possible, then, for these arts to be classified as a "phase" of kali.

With regard to the term kali as being the name of a pre-Hispanic Filipino martial art, it is not. There is no historical, anthropological, or literary evidence to support the contention that an art by this name existed during or prior to the sixteenth century. In fact, there is a great deal of speculation as to the original meaning and use of the term in the Philippines. Placido Yambao, for example, equates the shortened term kali as having derived from martial arts terms in various dialects such as pagkalikali (Ibanag), kalirongan (Pangasinan), and kaliradman (Visayan).[9] Remy Presas posits that the term derives from the Indonesian martial art of tjakalele.[10] Some claim that the term derives from the black and bloody Hindu goddess Kali, consort of the Hindu god Siva.[11] Others associate the term kali as deriving from the name of the *kalis* sword, and reverse spelling of silat (or silak). Still others equate the term with an abbreviation of Kalimantan (North Borneo), the island from which the ten *datus* fled, eventually establishing the Bothoan on Panay. However, a study of various historical, anthropological, literary, and "popular" sources indicates that the term, as used to identify a martial art, did not exist prior to the twentieth century.

A study of the popular martial arts magazines finds the term originally associated with the martial arts group of the late grandmaster, Floro Villabrille. In fact, the current grandmaster of the system, Ben Largusa, states that the term kali is an acronym derived from the Visayan word roots *ka,* from *kamut* (hands) and *li,* from *lihok* (movement). Moreover, kali was not the name of Villabrille's system prior to relocating to Hawaii as evidenced by his rank certificate which states that he is a grandmaster of escrima. Again, even within its intended context the term kali is neither used nor mentioned.

The term in fact became popular through the extensive writings on Filipino martial arts by Dan Inosanto. It is Inosanto who has had perhaps the greatest influence on the public's perception of what constitutes the Filipino arts and the history associated with them. To his credit, Inosanto has successfully established the existence of the Filipino fighting systems along side the more popular martial arts of Korea, China, and Japan. However, it is his misunderstanding of the arts, due no doubt from the lack of scholarly material on the subject, which has also misled the public. In presenting the arts, like others before him, Inosanto chose to be over simplistic and lump

all of the Filipino martial arts under one category (i.e., kali). While it is indeed this simplicity that allowed the public to construct an understanding of the Filipino martial arts, it also led to a great deal of confusion when attempting to reconstruct the origins and characteristics of the various systems, and hence try to classify them.

Any attempt at classifying the Filipino martial arts based on the names which practitioners have ascribed to them, is necessarily confounded by the interchangeability of many Filipino terms. The inherent problem with trying to distinguish between the plethora of names which are ascribed to the Filipino martial arts, is that without an understanding of what the terms connotes it may appear that all of the different terms refer to the same art.

After closely analyzing the "systems" of the contemporary masters, and as a result of having an intimate understanding of the arts through eighteen years of participant observation, I was able to construct the following organization of the terms into specific categories relating to Filipino martial arts in general. From this analysis, I have determined that there are four categories into which all of the terms fall, thus enabling an understand of what, specifically, they refer to. First, there are over twenty-five generic terms that refer to "the Filipino art of weaponry," (e.g., eskrima, kabaroan, pananandata). Second, there are over thirty-five "styles" of Filipino fighting techniques, (i.e., *abaniko, doblete, lastiko*). Third, there are eight categories by which the masters name their arts (e.g., after the province where they are from, after the names of culture-heroes, after their art's predominant fighting range). And fourth, there are over seventy "systems" of Filipino martial arts, (e.g., Biñas dynamic arnis, kali Ilustrisimo, Giron arnis/escrima). (For detailed lists of these four categories, *see* Appendixes 1 through 3).

It is therefore easy to see why people assume that the terms kali, eskrima, and arnis represent a single art-form—They are all terms which generically refer to the Filipino art of weaponry, regardless of martial "system." This does not mean, however, that all of the "systems" of Filipino weaponry are the same: they are not. Next, we must distinguish between a martial arts "style" and "system." The term *style* refers to methods or characteristics of fighting movements, such as the *abaniko* or "fanning" style. Within each "style" is found a number of fighting "techniques," or arranged sequences of offensive and defensive movements in response to general or specific attacks. So, within the various "styles" of fighting are the "techniques" which comprise the Filipino martial arts. A "system," then, is made up of "techniques" from a variety of "styles," which are intimately connected and taught in a progressive manner. And finally, the name that a master ascribes to his "system" is chosen from one of eight categories.

To exemplify this, while demonstrating his "system" a master might say it is called the *abaniko* "style" of pananandata. From this, the public might assume that his "system" is called pananandata abaniko. However, this may not be so. As a result of all of these terms coming into play when referring to a Filipino martial art (e.g., the system's name; the name of its fighting "styles" and their respective "techniques"), it is easy to see how a general misunderstanding toward their respective identities has evolved.

What is clear, then, is that the only terms that are interchangeable are those which refer to the "Filipino art of weaponry" in a general sense. With this in mind, the terms kali, eskrima, arnis, kabaroan, and pananandata, for example, are the same insofar as they refer to the Filipino art of weaponry in a global sense (much like the term *bujutsu* refers to the Japanese martial arts in general and not to the specific systems of karate, judo, or kyudo in particular). The distinction between what constitutes a general term for Filipino arts of weaponry, stylistic fighting techniques, and names of specific systems, then, should now be clear.

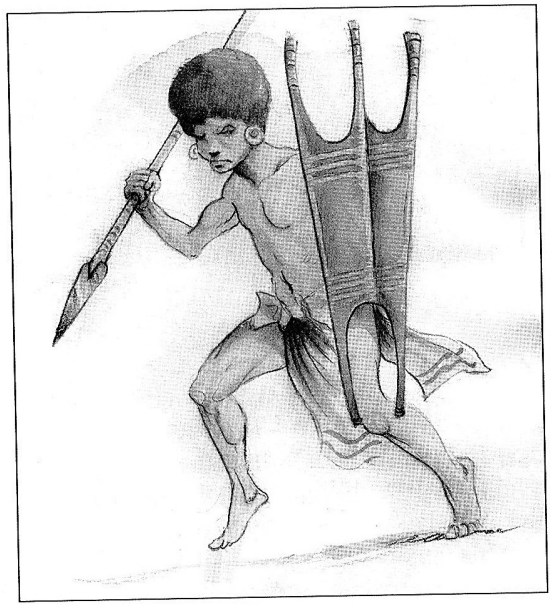
With the apparent confusion over the terminology of Filipino martial arts resolved, a general classification of the Filipino martial arts "systems" can be constructed. As indicated by the results of this study, it is clear that the martial arts of the contemporary Filipino masters tend to fall into three classifications: "ancient," "classical," and "modern."[11] The martial arts found in twentieth century Philippines are the culmination of an evolutionary process which includes influences from Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Europe, the United States, and Japan. It is therefore impossible to define the "classical" systems of eskrima or the "modern" systems of arnis, for example, as a "phase" of any art which did not evolve during their respective time-periods.

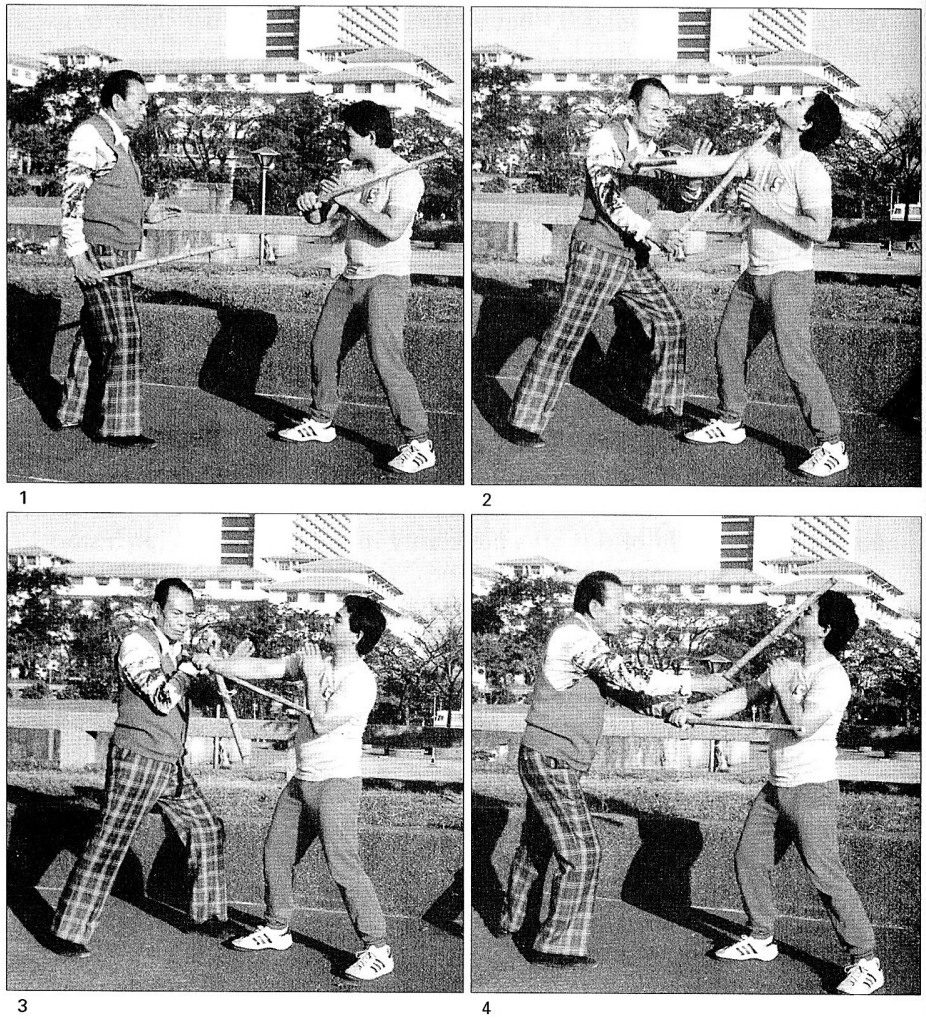
The following are definitions of the "ancient," "classical," and "moderns" systems, visually illustrated with technique photographs. (Since the Filipino martial arts are not based on static postures but ever-changing and fluid movements, the reader is urged not to attend to the esthetic quality of each pose but rather to analyze the more important qualities of body positioning, control of distance, and angles of attack and defense.) Please note that this tripartite classification system is a general way of categorizing the Filipino martial arts, and is by no means the only way. In addition, many of the Filipino martial arts fall into more than one classification because they are composite systems (i.e., made up of several Filipino arts). With this in mind, the martial arts of the eighteen masters presented in Part Four are categorized here by the classification they most effectively fit into. Since fighting techniques are artifacts of a time and place, and the proceeding systems are more than not contemporary "creations" (i.e., founded, developed, or refined during the twentieth century), they are not classified by

the date they were "founded," but by their technical fighting characteristics. Therefore, if a martial art was founded twenty years ago, for example, but its techniques are characteristic of the "ancient" systems, it is classified as such.

■ THE "ANCIENT" SYSTEMS

"Ancient" Filipino martial arts were practiced prior to the arrival of the Spanish in 1521. Generally speaking, the "ancient" arts (often referred to as kali), are structured around the use of Indonesian and Malaysian swords (i.e., *kris, barong, kampilan),* the use of indigenous projectile weapons (i.e., *sumpit, pana),* the use of flexible weapons (i.e., *kadena, panyo),* with footwork patterns structured around elaborate geometric shapes. Preserved in the unconquered Muslim areas of the southern Philippines, these arts did not undergo the same evolutionary process as did eskrima and arnis. Therefore, the "ancient" art of kali could not have possibly maintained eskrima or arnis in its curricular phases—Spain, the United States, and Japan had not, as of the height of this art's popularity in the archipelago (prehistory to A.D. 1521), dominated the Philippines. The following are examples of techniques found in three "ancient" systems of kali Ilustrisimo, lameco eskrima, and Tobosa kali/escrima.

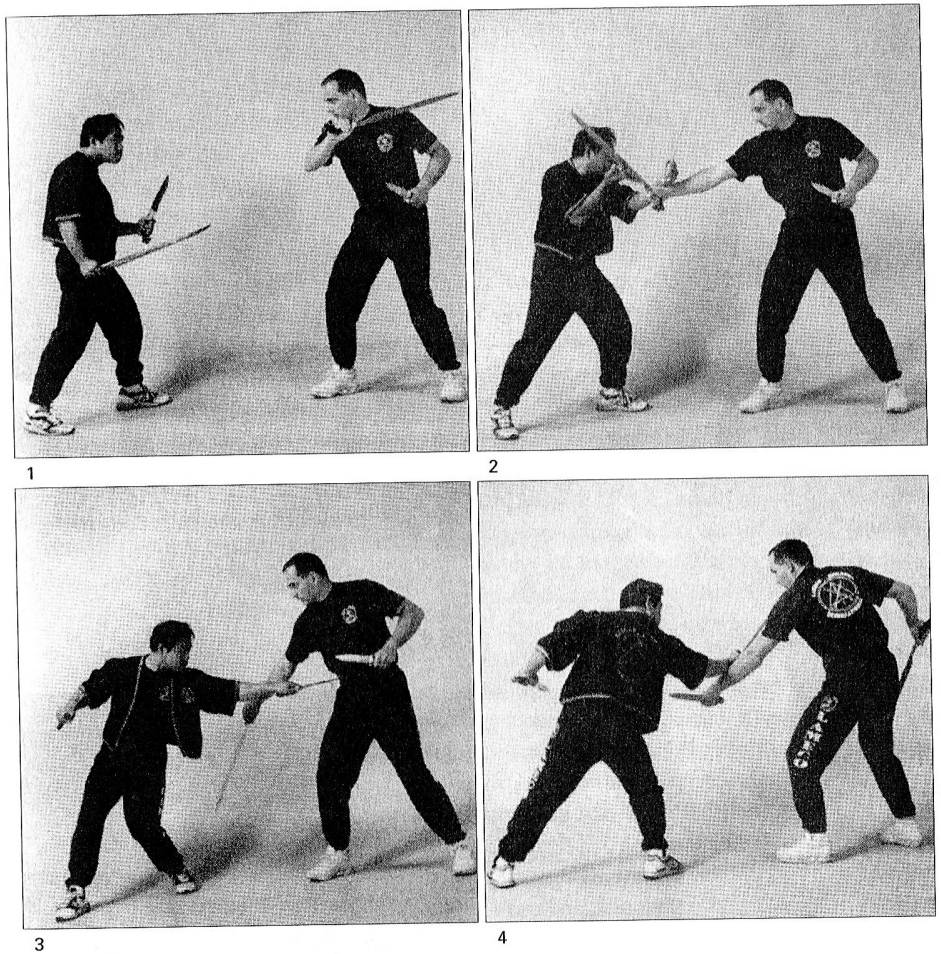




1 2

3 4

Kali Ilustrisimo
Antonio Ilustrisimo (left) prepares to defend against a backhand stick strike initiated by Edgar Sulite (Fig. 1). As the stick nears, Ilustrisimo steps to diagonally forward to the left while parrying the attacking-arm and thrusting the tip of his stick into the attacker's throat (Fig. 2). Ilustrisimo then maintains the check on his opponent's arm as he brings his own stick around it (Fig. 3). He finishes the technique by switching his lead leg and striking his opponent on the head (Fig. 4).



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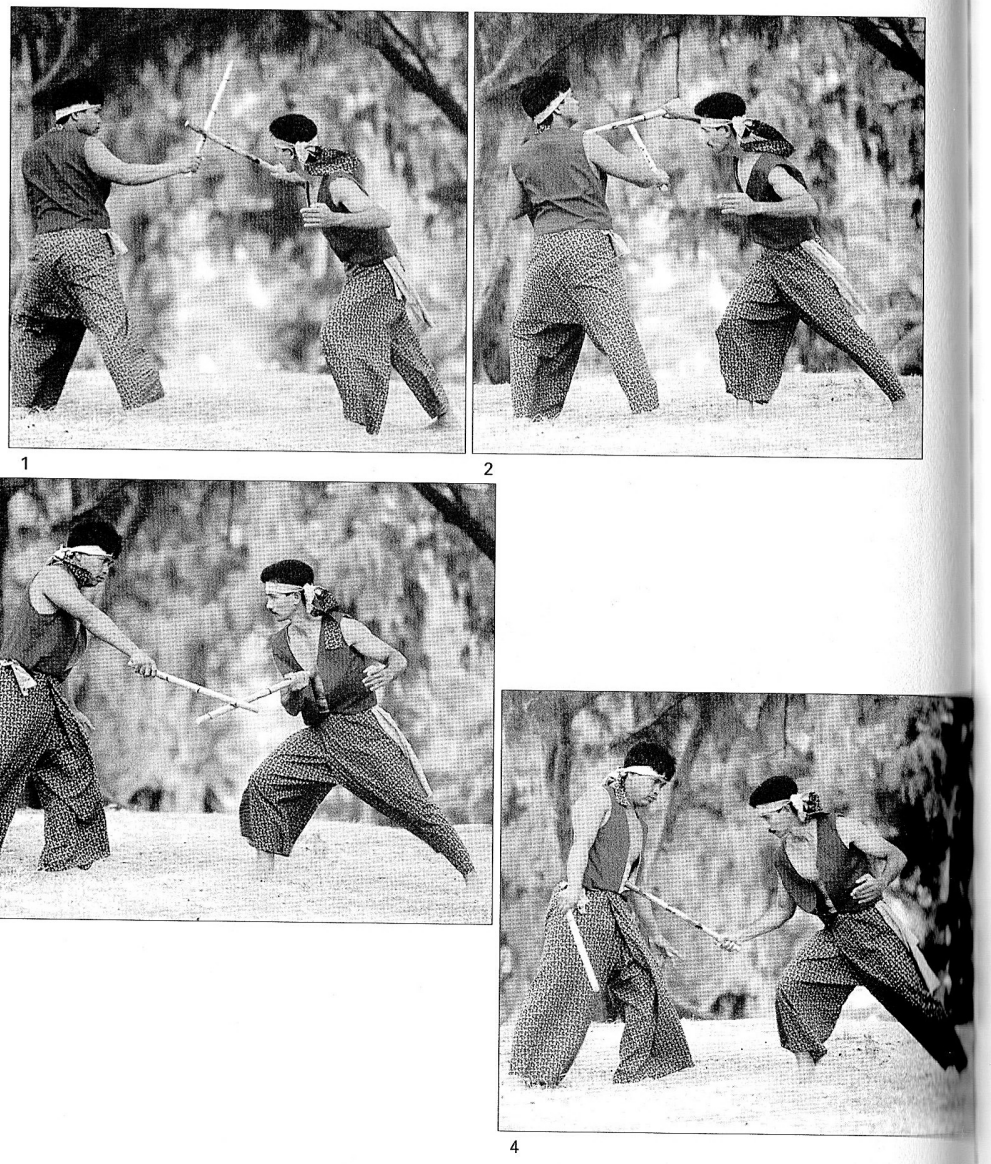
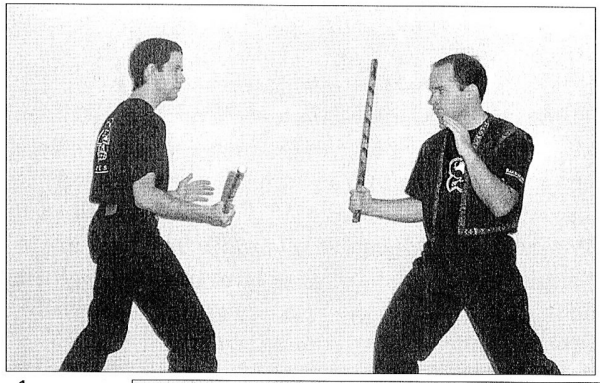
Lameco Eskrima
Edgar Sulite (left) prepares to engage in a sword and dagger fight (Fig. 1). As the opponent executes a backhand slash with his sword, Sulite blocks it with his own sword, while using his left wrist to slow the momentum of the strike (Fig. 2). Continuing with the momentum of the strike, Sulite repositions his body while thrusting his dagger into the opponent's stomach (Fig. 3). The opponent follows-up with a straight dagger thrust, which Sulite avoids by stepping back with his left leg and simultaneously redirecting the strike while slashing the opponent's neck (Fig. 4).



Tobosa Kali/Escrima
Donald Mendoza (right) blocks an overhead stick strike from Paul Tobosa (Fig. 1), and counters with a stick thrust to his throat (Fig. 2). The opponent initiates a follow-up strike to Mendoza's knee, which is blocked (Fig. 3). Mendoza finishes the technique by thrusting his stick into the opponent's stomach (Fig. 4).

■ THE "CLASSICAL" SYSTEMS

"Classical" Filipino martial arts evolved during a three-century ban on the "ancient" martial arts (1565–1898). Many of these systems, therefore, encompasses elements of European swordplay which the preserved "ancient" arts do not. Initially, the arts of eskrima, for example, were practiced with long and short sticks—as even the brandishing of the general utility *bolo* was prohibited. Since Western fencing became a favorite past time among *mestizos* (Filipinos of Spanish descent) sticks were later replaced by European-style edged weapons such as the *estoc*. The footwork patterns of the "classical" weapons systems tend to be structured around a triangle set between two parallel lines. Moreover, while the classical systems generally have an elaborate repertoire of hand-to-weapon defenses they have only marginal techniques of hand-to-hand fighting. The following are examples of techniques found in eight "classical" systems of arnis Escorpizo, Biñas dynamic arnis, Cabales serrada escrima, Giron arnis/escrima, lightning scientific arnis, pananandata Mariñas, and Rigonan-Estalilla kabaroan.



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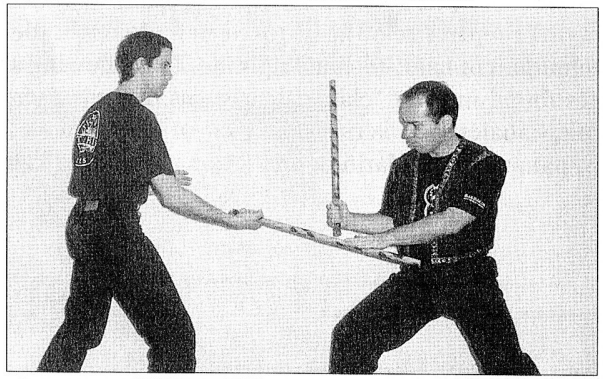

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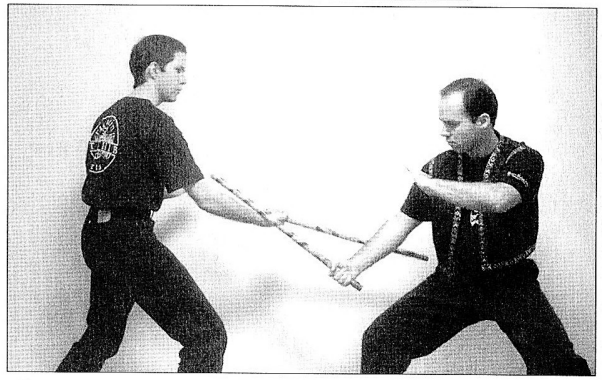

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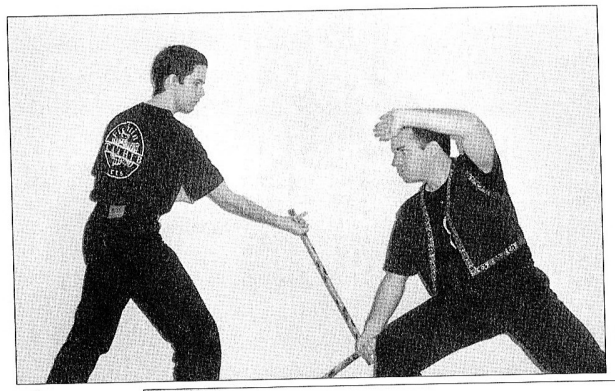

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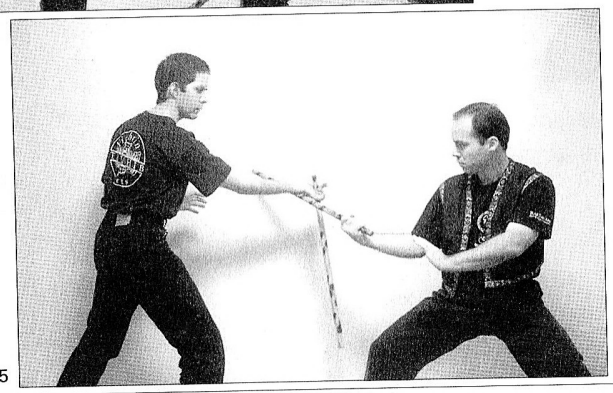

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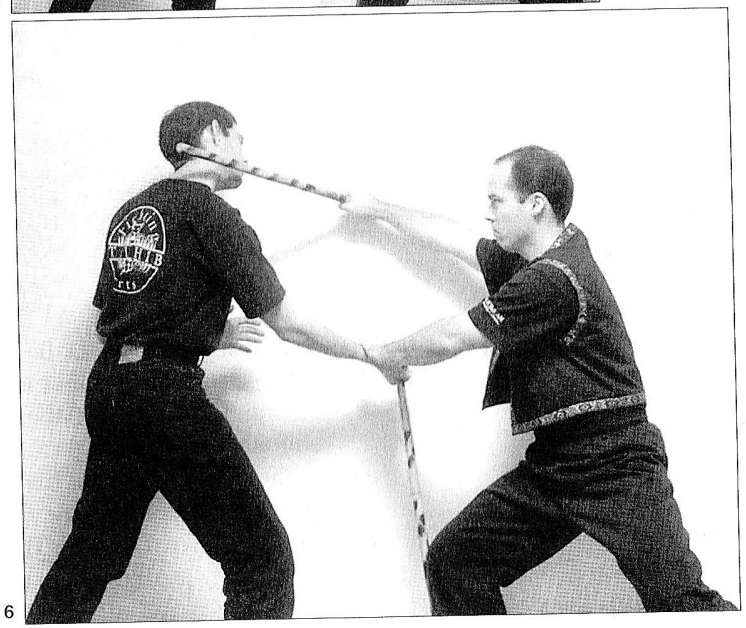

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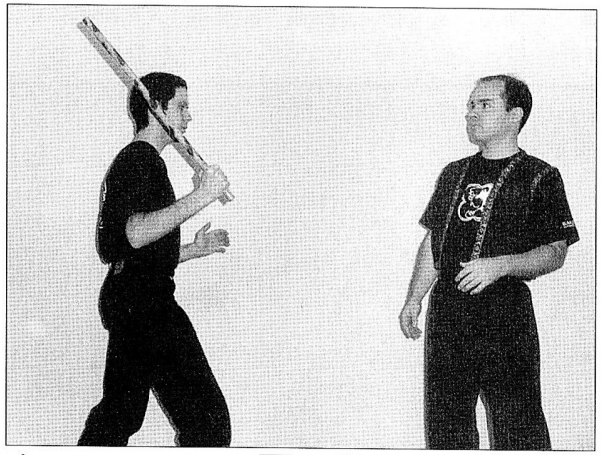
Arnis Escorpizo
The author (right) prepares to defend against a horizontal stick strike (Fig. 1). As the opponent's stick nears, Wiley parries it with his left hand (Fig. 2), and counters with a series of strikes to the opponent's hand (Figs. 3–5). He finishes the techniques by checking the opponent's arm and striking the his head (Fig. 6).



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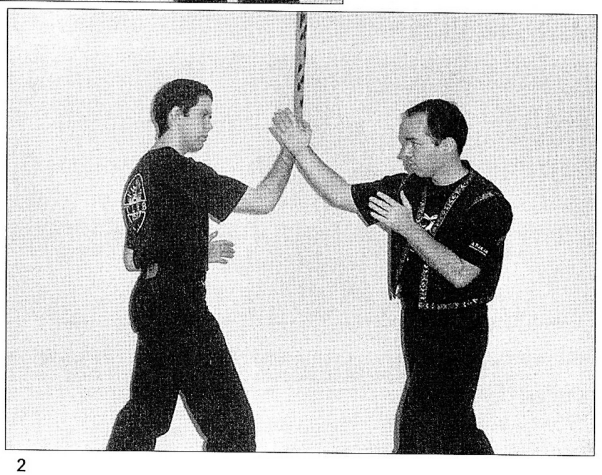

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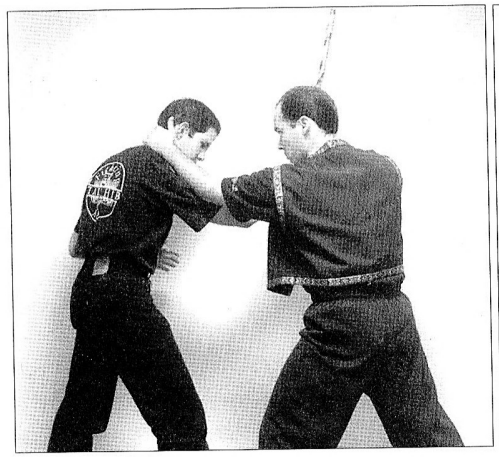
Biñas Dynamic Arnis

The author (right) prepares to defend against a stick attack (Fig. 1). As the strike nears, Wiley steps on a forward angle with his left foot and redirects the strike with the back of his right hand (Fig. 2). He then grabs the opponent's neck with his left hand and wrist with his right hand (Fig. 3). Wiley then steps forward with his right foot and wraps his opponent's attacking arm around the his head (Fig. 4), and controls the opponent by using his left hand to grab the opponent's right wrist (Fig. 5). The opponent is then thrown to the ground by simultaneously pushing on exposed elbow and pulling on the grabbed wrist (Fig. 6).



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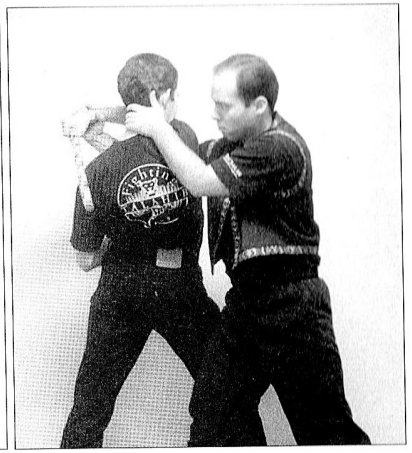

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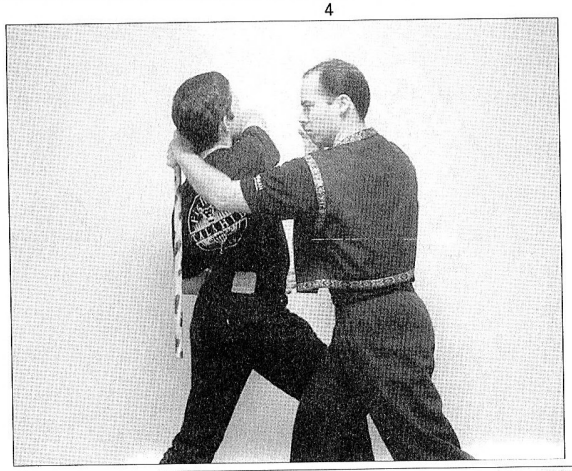

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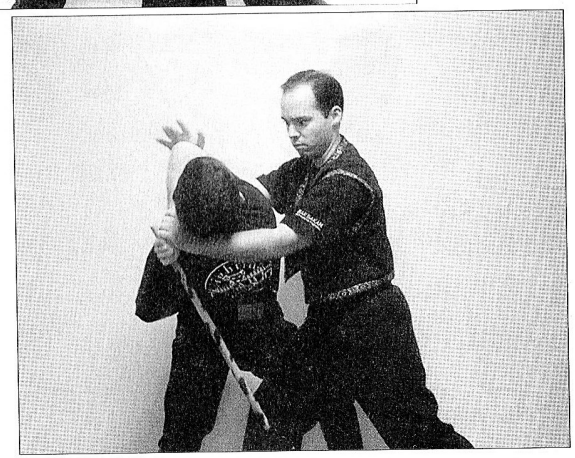

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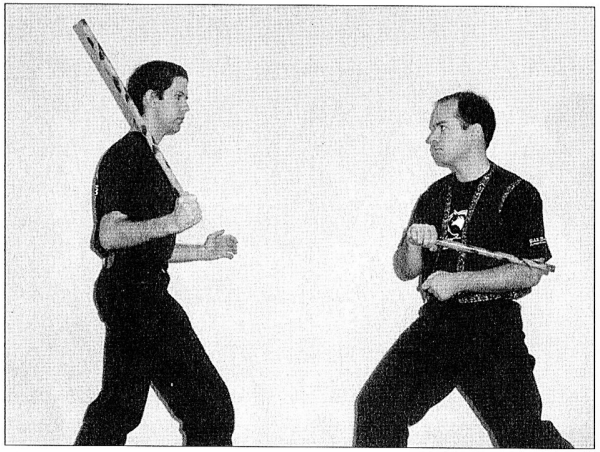

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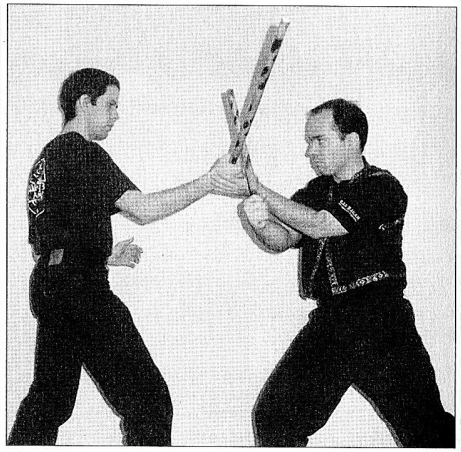

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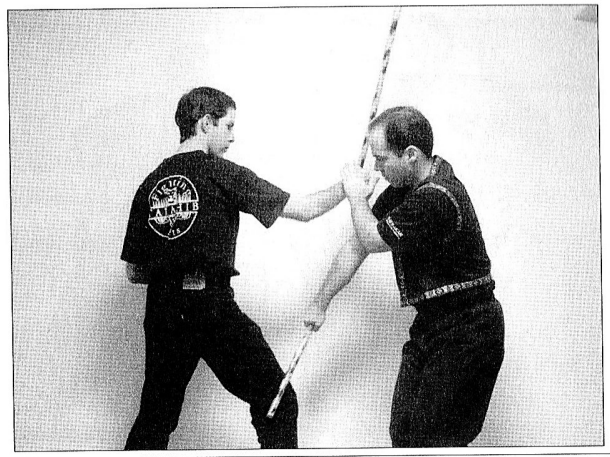
Cabales Serrada Escrima

The author (right) prepares to defend against a stick strike (Fig. 1). As the strike nears, Wiley blocks it with his own stick (Fig. 2) and placing his checking-hand under the opponent's attacking-hand (Fig. 3). Next, Wiley steps forward with his left leg, raises the opponent's stick, and strikes him on the knee (Fig. 4). Wiley then repositions himself by stepping back with his right leg and checking the opponent's lead-arm (Fig. 5). He finishes the techniques by delivering a strike the opponent's head (Fig. 6).



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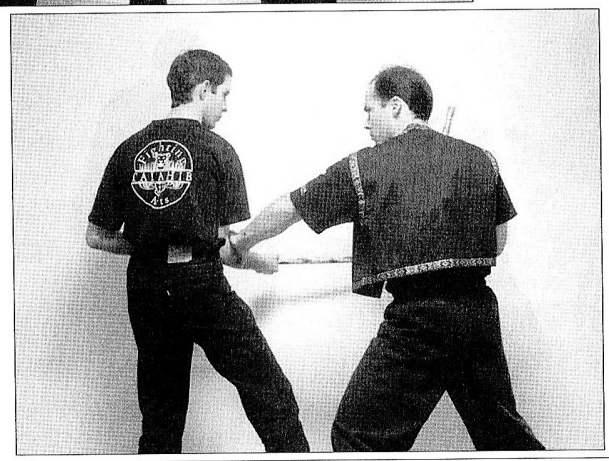

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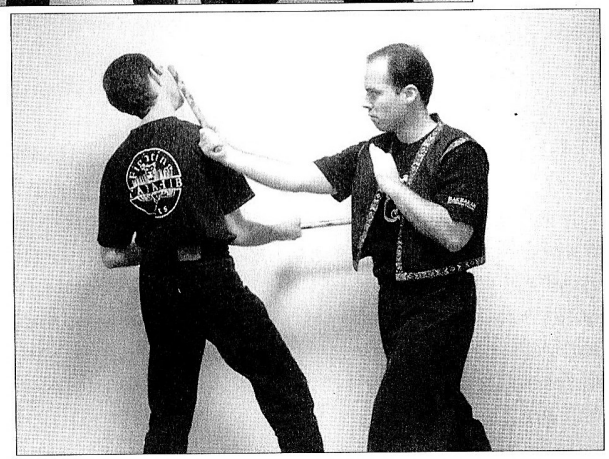

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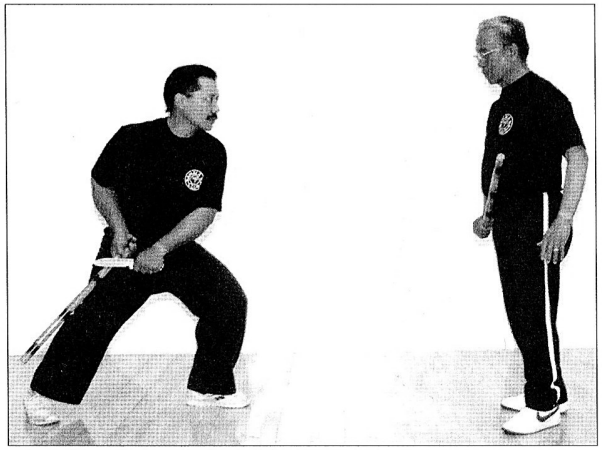

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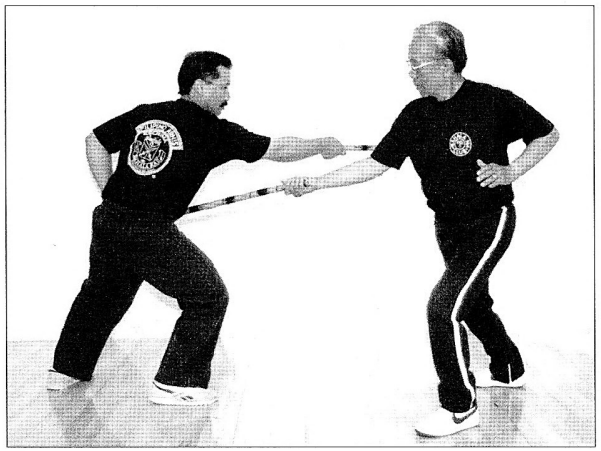

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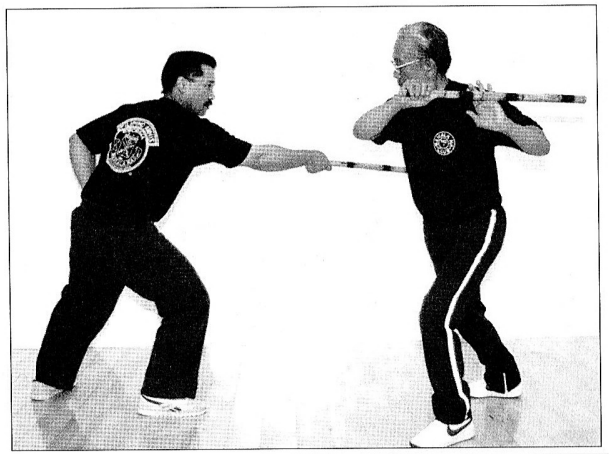

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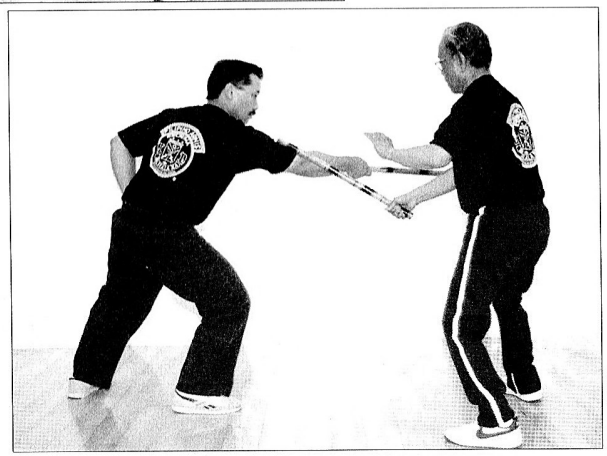

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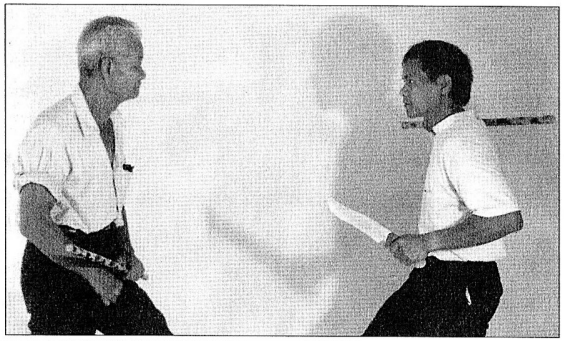
Giron Arnis/Escrima

Leo Giron (right) prepares to defend against an attack by Tony Somera (Fig. 1). Giron avoids the strike by stepping to the left, angling his body, and parrying the stick with his own stick (Fig. 2). The parry follows naturally into an upward strike across the opponent's stomach (Figs. 3, 4). Giron finishes the technique by shifting his posture and weight to the right, while delivering a backhand strike to the elbow of the opponent's striking arm (Fig. 5).



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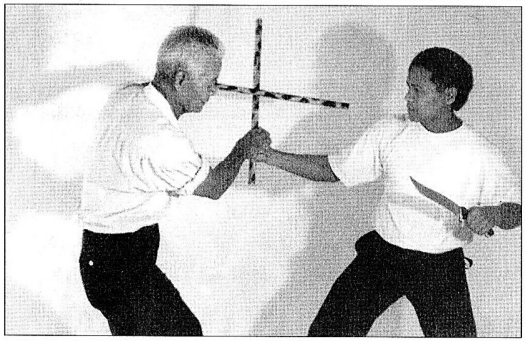

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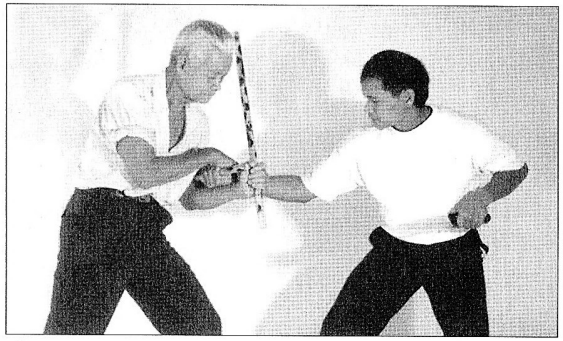

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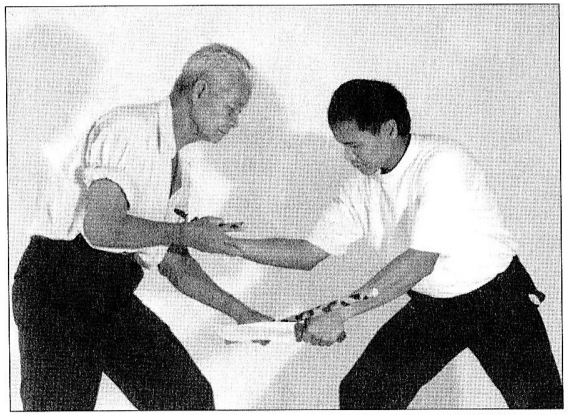
Lightning Scientific Arnis
Benjamin Luna-Lema (left) prepares to defend against an attack by Elmer Ybañez (Fig. 1). As the strike nears Lema blocks it and checks the opponent's hand (Fig. 2), en route to tying-up opponent's attacking arm (Fig. 3). Although the opponent is locked, Lema is free to check and block the knife thrust (Fig. 4). Lema finishes the technique by repositioning his body away from the knife (Fig. 5) and locking his opponent's limbs once again (Fig. 6) and taking him down (Fig. 7).



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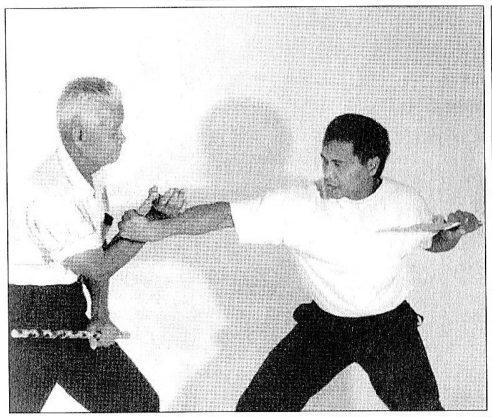

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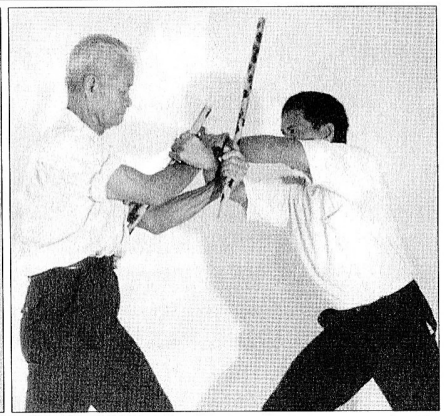

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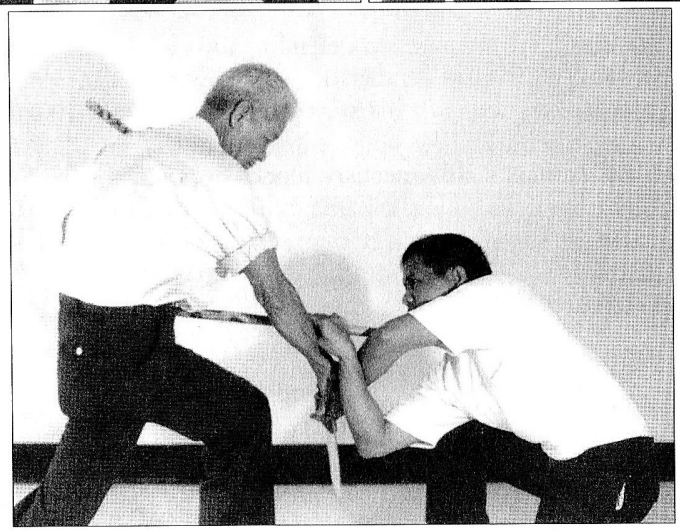

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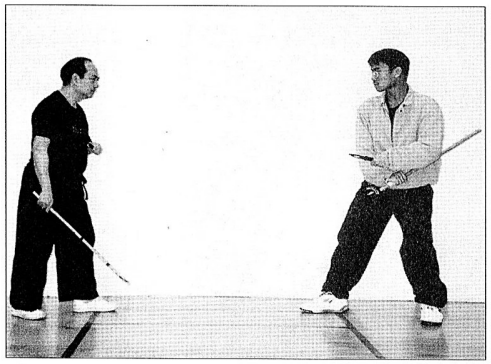

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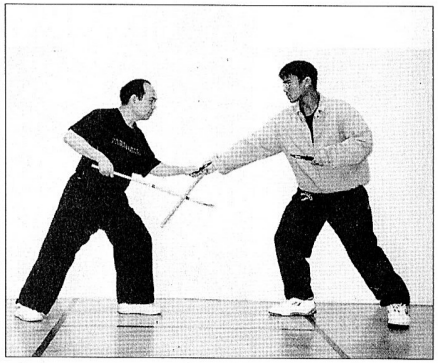

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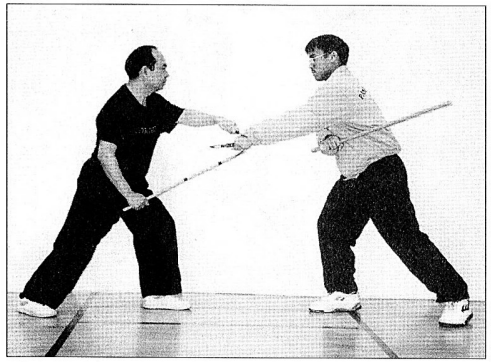

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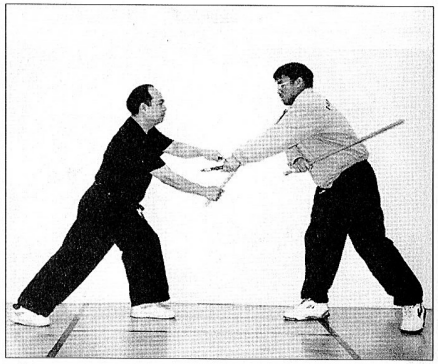

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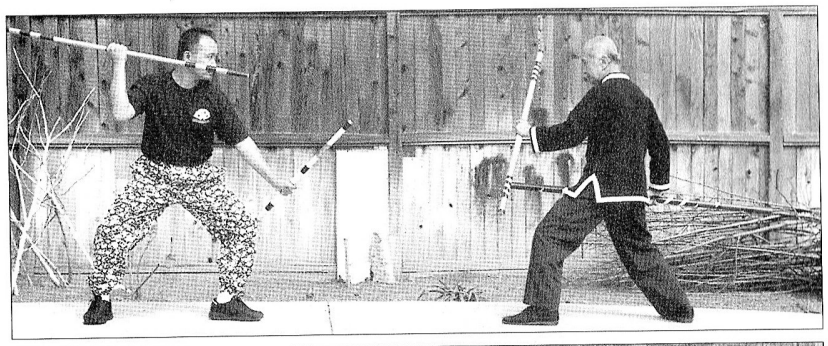
Pananandata Marinas

Amante Mariñas' (left) prepares to defend against a stick-and-dagger attack by his son, Mat (Fig. 1). As the stick strike nears, Mariñas steps to the left, and blocks the stick with his stick while simultaneously cutting his opponent's hand (Fig. 2). The opponent immediately attempts a dagger thrust, which Mariñas simultaneously blocks by simultaneously striking the opponent's hand with his stick, and cutting the opponent's hand with his dagger (Fig. 3). To finish the technique, Mariñas maintains the check on the opponent's attacking hand with his dagger, and thrusts his own stick under the opponent's arm, striking him in the throat (Fig. 4).

Rigonan-Estalilla Kabaroan

Ramiro Estalilla (right) squares-off with his son, Prince (Fig. 1). Estalilla initiates with a sibat thrust, which is blocked (Fig. 2). Estalilla immediately follows up with a thrust with his bangkaw (Fig. 3), which also is blocked. This was s set-up by Estalilla to open the unguarded line of attack on the right side of his opponent's head, for a circular strike (Fig. 4).



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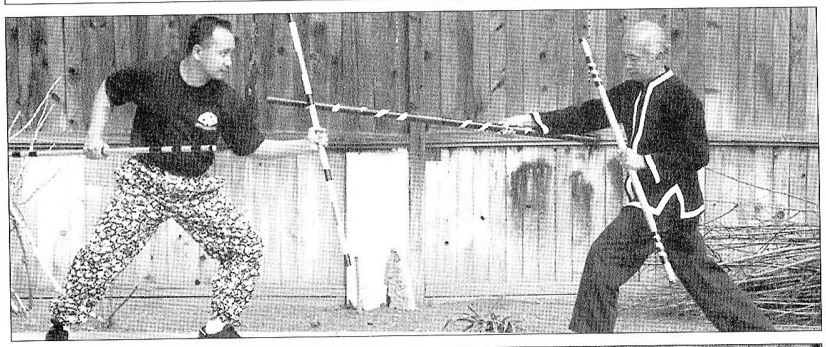

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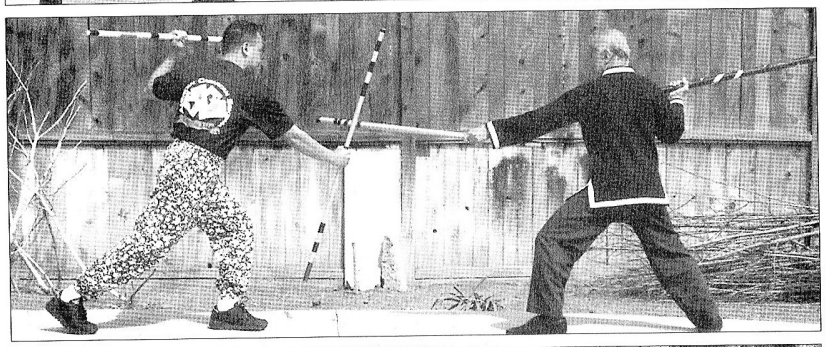

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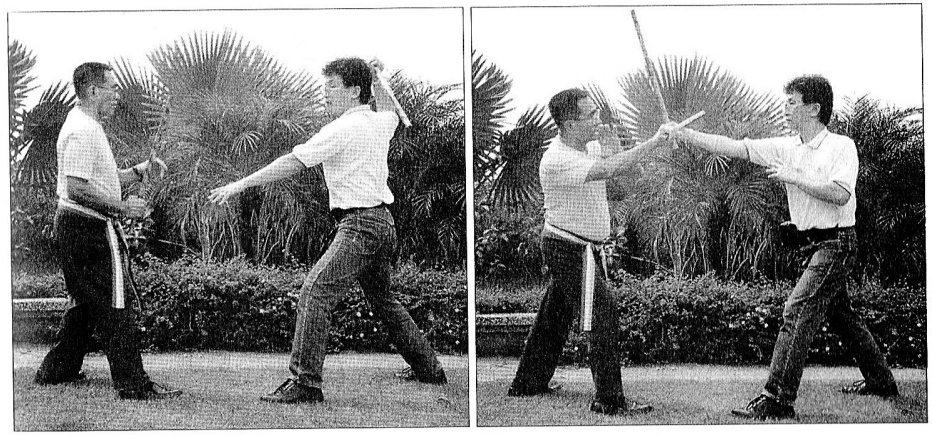
8

■ THE "MODERN" SYSTEMS

"Modern" Filipino martial arts evolved as a result of Philippine independence from Spain, and subsequent culture contact with the United States and Japan (1898 to the present). These "modern" martial arts generally feature the inclusion of hand-to-hand defensive techniques largely incorporated from any combination of Okinawan, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese sources. Moreover, they tend to lack sophisticated footwork with training essentially centered around modern sport competition. The following are examples of techniques found in seven "modern" systems of arnis Lanada, Balintawak arnis cuentada, hagibis, kuntaw lima-lima, sagasa, sikaran, Tendencia arnis, and Vee arnis jitsu.

Arnis Lanada

Porferio Lanada (left) prepares to defend against an attack by Alex Ngoi (Fig. 1). As the attacker's stick nears, Lanada pivots to the right as he maneuvers his stick behind the opponent's (Fig. 2), thus directing it down and avoiding impact (Fig. 3). With his own stick already in position, Lanada immediately grabs the opponent's wrist (Fig. 4), and disarms him by moving his own hands in opposite directions (Fig, 5). Using the momentum of the disarm, Lanada finishes the technique by striking the opponent and taking him down with a stick-lock (Fig. 6).



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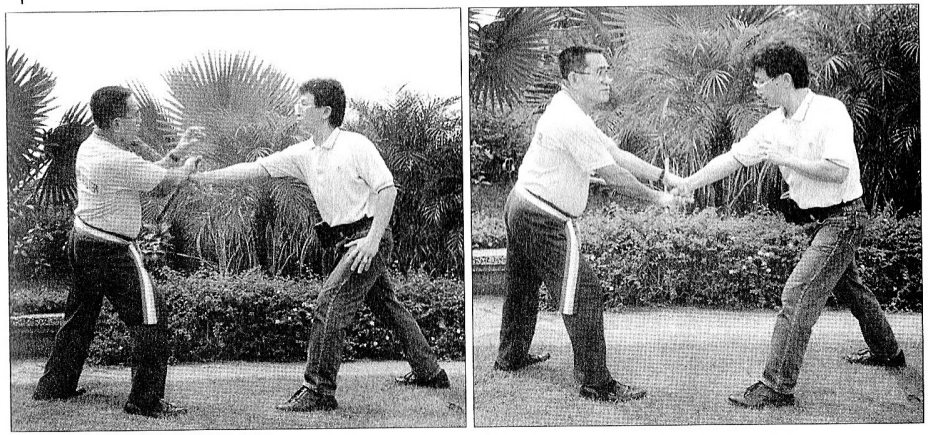

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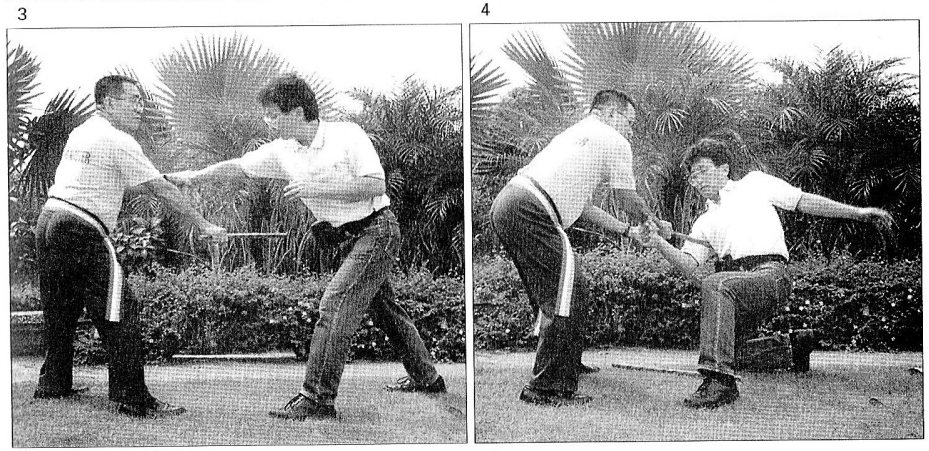

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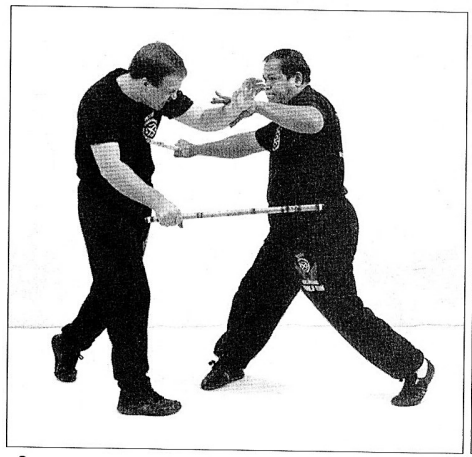

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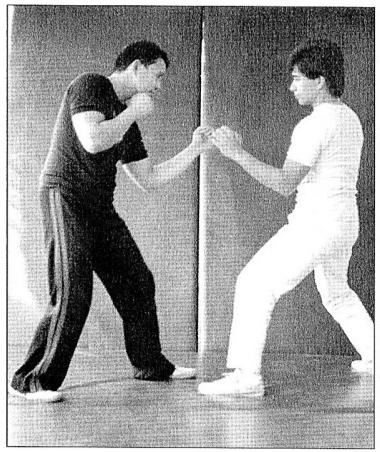
Balintawak Arnis Cuentada

Bobby Taboada (right) prepares to defend against his opponent's stick strike and punch combination (Fig. 1). Taboada pivots to the left while deflecting the thrust with his stick (Fig. 2). As the opponent initiates the left follow-up punch, Taboada immediately parries it with his free hand, and counters with a horizontal stick strike to his ribs (Figs. 3, 4). The opponent attempts a stick strike to the face, which Taboada blocks with his stick (Fig. 5). Taboada completes the technique by raising his stick arm, while maintaining control of his opponent's attacking arm (Fig. 6), checking it with his left hand (Fig. 7), and finishing with a backhand blow to the opponent's head (Fig. 8).



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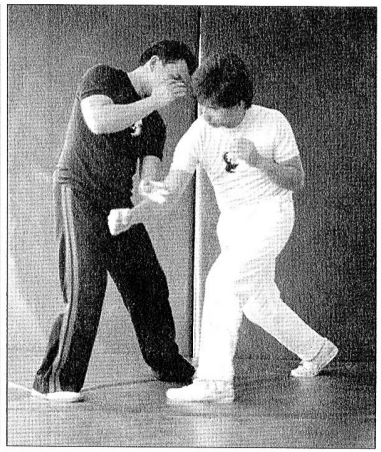

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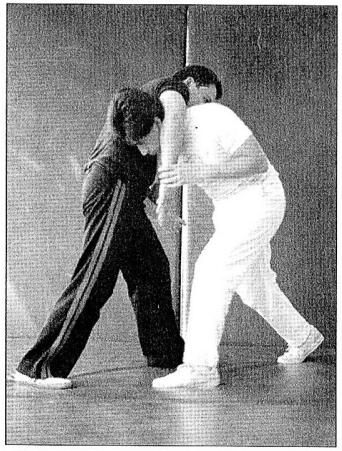

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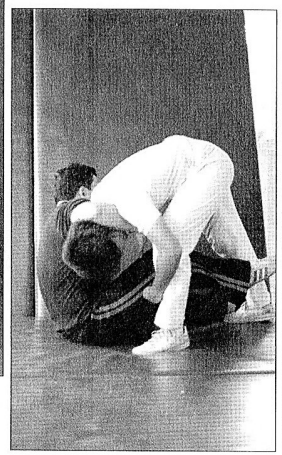

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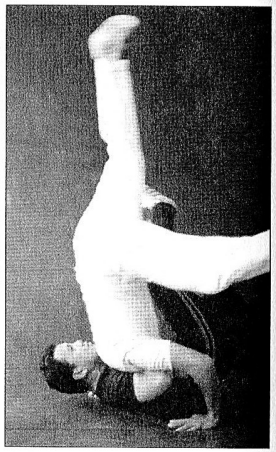

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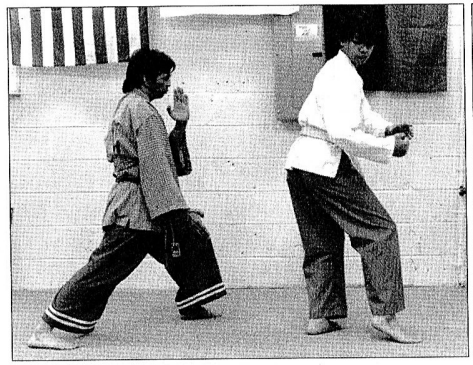
Hagibis
Ray Galang (left) prepares to defend against a punch (Fig. 1). As the strike nears, Galang deflects it with his left arm (Fig. 2), lowers his center of gravity, and wraps his right arm around his opponent's neck (Fig. 3). This position allows Galang to kick his leg through the opponent's and drop to the ground (Fig. 4), throwing the opponent head-over-heals (Fig. 5).



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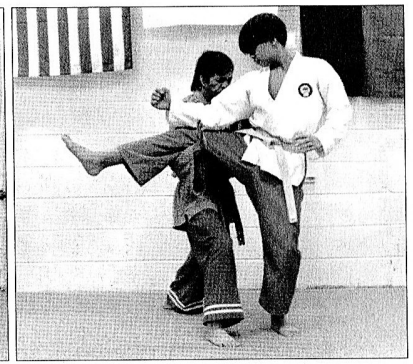

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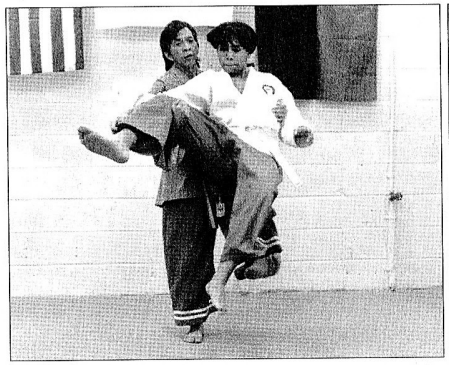

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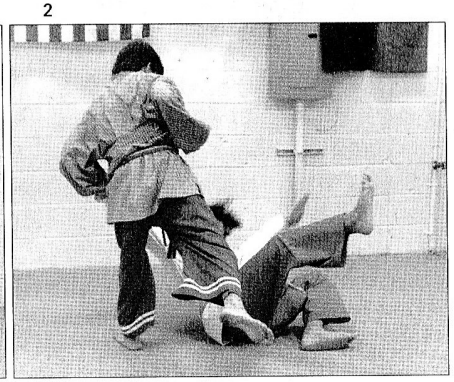

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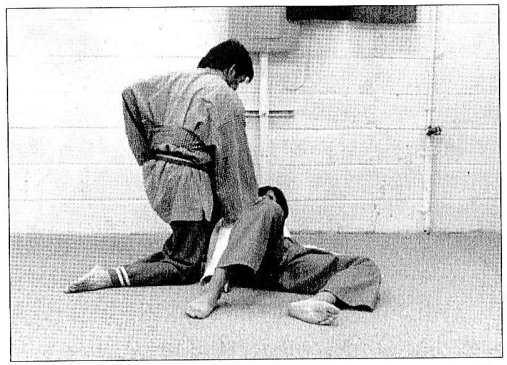

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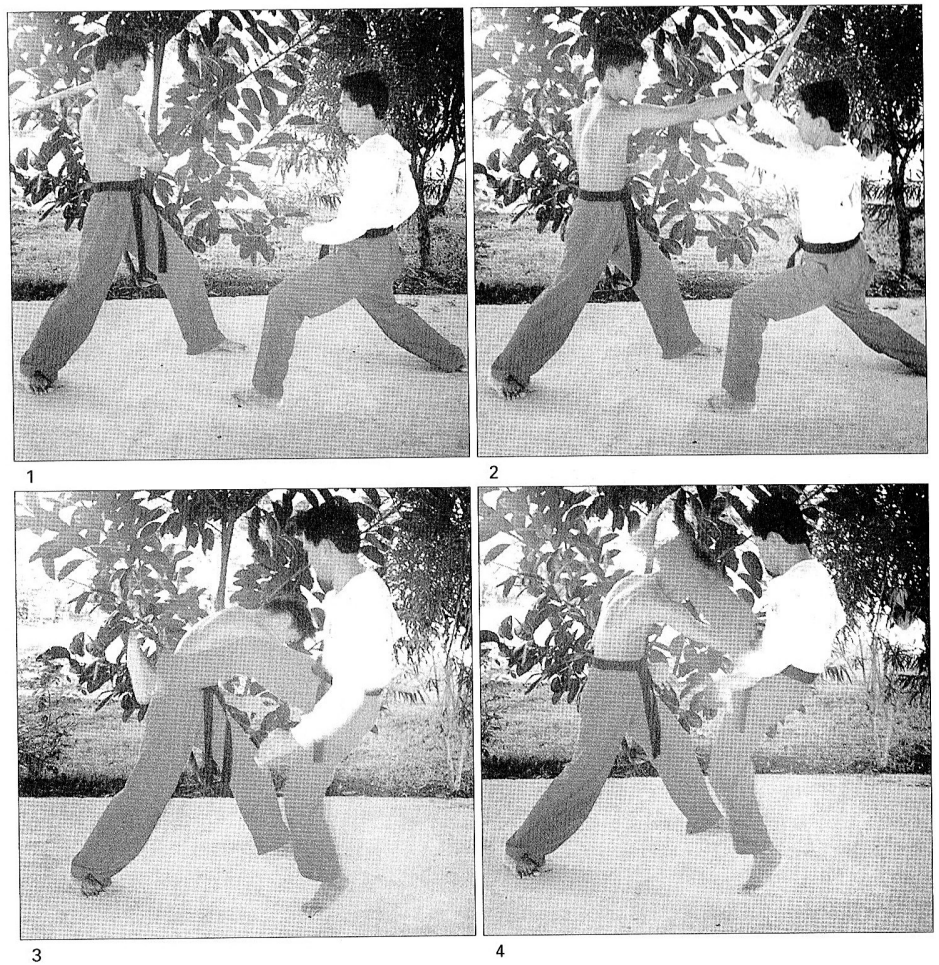
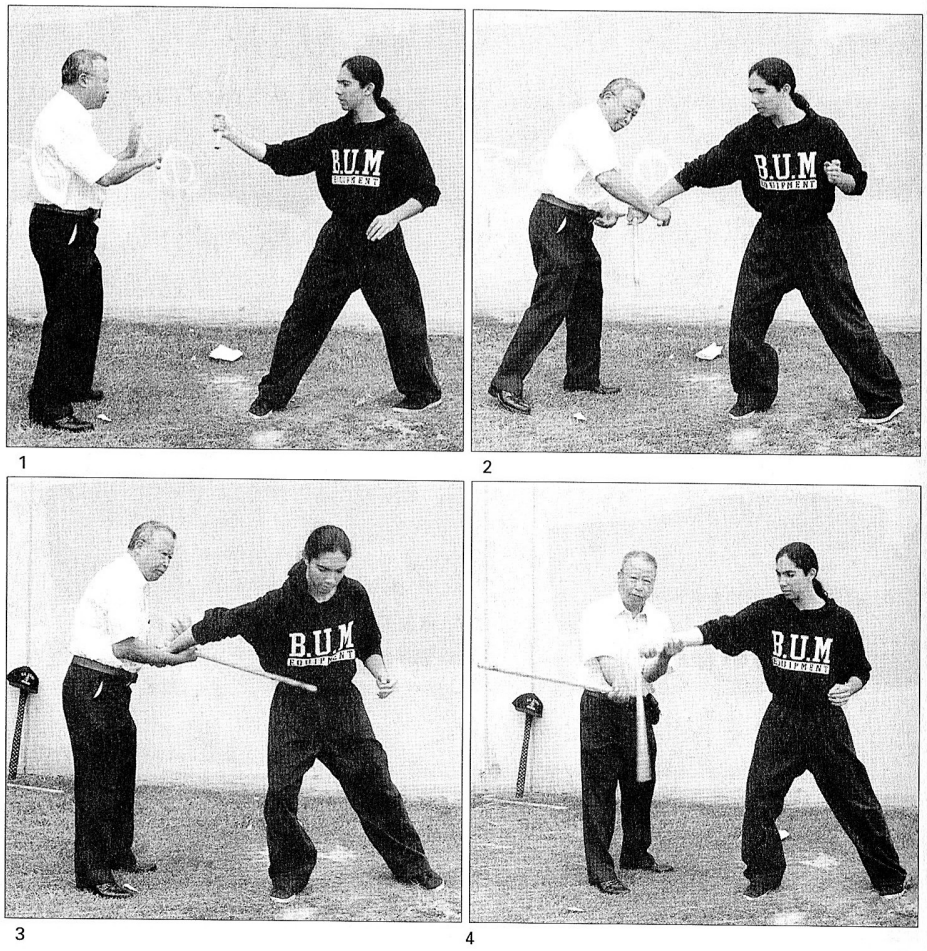
Kuntaw Lima-Lima
Carlito Lañada (left) prepares to defend against a spinning kick (Fig. 1). As the kick nears, Lañada pivots 90 degrees to the right and scoops the oncoming leg (Fig. 2), then kicks-out the opponent's supporting leg (Fig. 3). Lañada then sweeps the opponent while maintaining control of his right arm (Fig. 4), and finished with a reverse punch to his throat (Fig. 5).

Sagasa
Christopher Ricketts (right) prepares to defend against an attack by Ronnie Ricketts (Fig. 1). As the opponent attacks, Ricketts shifts his body to the left while parrying the attack with his left hand (Fig. 2). He then steps forward and places his right leg behind his opponent's left leg, places his right arm over his opponent's ribs while keeping his left arm in a ready position, thus breaking his opponent's balance (Fig. 3). To finish the technique, Ricketts pivots his body to the right and extends his right arm which causes his opponent to be thrown to the ground (Fig. 4).



Sikaran
Jimmy Geronimo (left) squares off with his opponent (Fig. 1). As the opponent executes an inward crescent kick, Geronimo parries it (Fig. 2). He then simultaneously grabs the opponent's extended leg to offset his balance, angles his body to the outside of the kicks direction of force, and counters with a roundhouse kick to the opponent's sternum (Fig. 3). As the opponent falls to the ground, Geronimo retracts his kicking leg to maintain the distance between him and his opponent, to avoid being attacked by ground-fighting techniques (Fig. 4).



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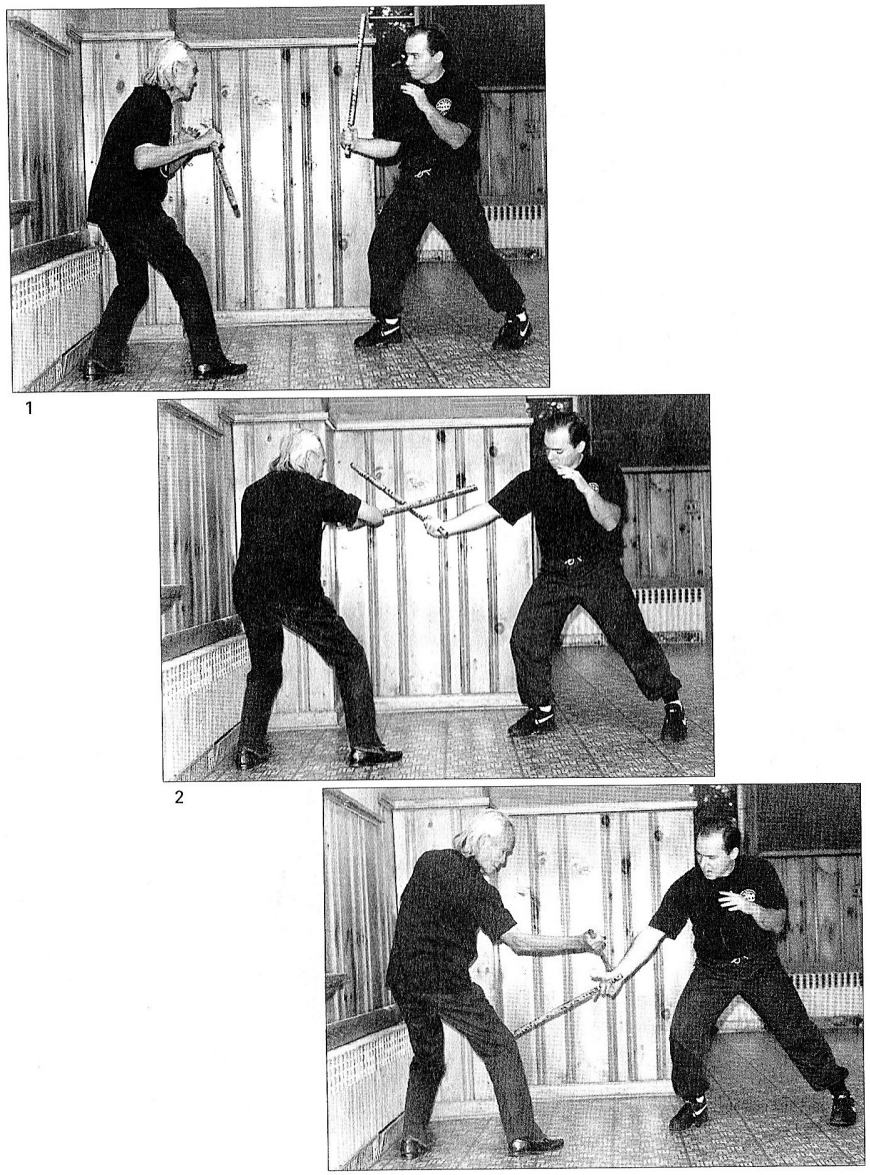
Tendencia Arnis

Sam Tendencia (left) prepare to block the opponent's overhand stick strike (Fig. 1). Immediately upon blocking the strike, Tendencia redirects it downward and inserts his stick around the opponent's while striking him (Fig. 2). Tendencia, with his left hand, turns the opponent's stick clockwise and, with the butt of his stick, immobilizes the opponent's hand (Fig. 3). To complete the technique, Tendencia pulls his stick to the side to disarm the opponent, while maintaining ahold of the opponent's wrist (Fig. 4).



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Vee Arnis Jitsu

Florendo Visitacion (left) prepares for an attack by the author (Fig. 1). Opponent initiates a forehand strike which is blocked (Fig. 2) and immediately countered with a strike to opponent's wrist (Fig. 3). After striking

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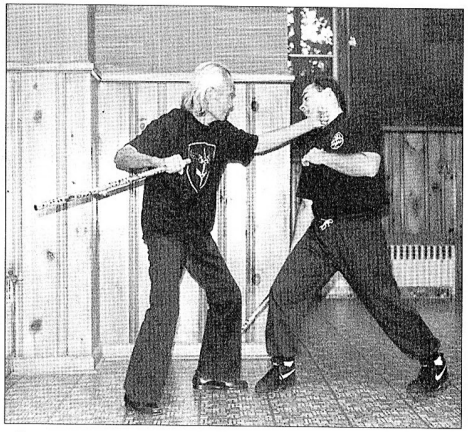

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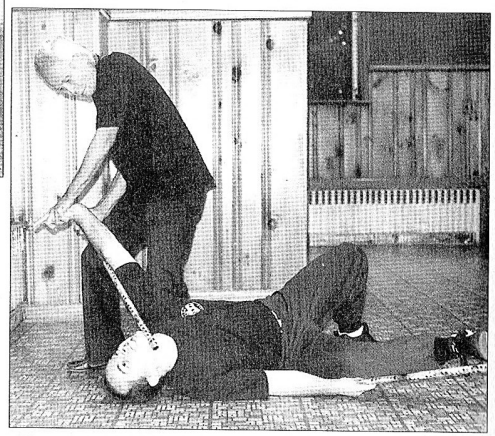

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opponent's wrist Visitacion checks it for safety while assuming a thrusting posture (Fig. 4), used to distract the opponent from the intended backhand strike to the jaw (Fig. 5). This is followed with a simultaneous wrist- lock and stick thrust to the neck (Fig. 6), finishing with a combination takedown/ arm-break/choking controlling maneuver (Fig. 7).

One may suspect that every martial art which has survived the plague of time is effective in combat. This is not necessarily so. A number of martial arts, Filipino and otherwise, have maintained their status through tradition although their techniques have become largely antiquated. A number of other systems are contemporary creations and have yet to be "proven" in an actual confrontation. Thus, many martial arts are more theoretical than practical.

The contemporary masters of the Filipino martial arts unanimously assert that their respective systems are the most effective in the world. In addition, many claim to be undefeated in "death-matches" which, of course, leads one to believe that they never fought one another in such contests. It is not possible that every master possesses the most effective techniques. If this were the case then a form of martial Darwinism would have taken place, leaving only the most effective martial art to exist in contemporary society. What we find in the Philippines and the United States, rather, is quite a diverse strata of Filipino martial arts. Each of these systems and their subsequent styles are certainly more effective in certain areas than others. Thus, many martial arts flourish, each effective in their own right. These systems, moreover, are better suited to certain individuals than others based on their general movement characteristics. To this end, the different personalities of these masters have contributed greatly to the diversity of Filipino martial arts. The prevalence of so many ethnic groups in the Philippines further adds to the uniqueness of its martial arts masters and the diversity, structure, and characteristic of their martial arts systems. Thus, there appears to be no simple blending, no unified art, no unified philosophy, but the three classifications of "ancient," "classical," and "modern." Given these observations, it is now appropriate to examine the ethos of Filipino martial culture in relation to that of other Asian countries.

Ethos of Filipino Martial Culture

As the martial arts in the Philippines have moved from "ancient" to "classical" to "modern," its practitioners have attempted to emulate what they perceive as "higher" forms of martial culture (e.g., the adoption of training uniforms, colored belt ranking, and structured group classes). This emulation began as a result of martial-culture contact with Spain. However, while the martial cultures of these countries have become more passive through time, the Filipinos have apparently been unable to shed their warrior ethos. This is evidenced in the continuation of legal "death-matches" until 1945, and their existence in private today—an event compounded by Filipino culture itself. One does not find this kind of combative ethos present in India, China, or Japan. And while the Filipinos have attempted to emulate

the evolution of martial arts as it is understood in these three countries, they have thus far been unsuccessful in doing so. However, unlike India, China, or Japan, the Filipino has been able to maintain the martial rigor of true fighting disciplines.

Essentially, it is postulated that the Filipinos have been unsuccessful in emulating "higher" martial arts forms as a result of the prevalent intensity of their warrior ethic. Whatever the impinging factor in Filipino culture—perhaps the self-concept of inferiority from being invaded and colonized by so many countries, or constant warring factions between islands—it is similar to Japan's pre-Tokugawa period. During Japan's seventeenth century Tokugawa period (1603-1868) the *bakufu* (military government) organized the various warrior factions into a single unit.[13] This has not taken place in the Philippines. As a result, there is still no single martial arts organization, political faction, ethnic or social integration. In essence, it can be said that the Philippines is faced with having no essential original national character.

In contemporary Indian society, martial arts have become so diluted that they are virtually found only expressed in dance forms. Even the classic writing by Draeger and Smith merely focuses on its sport-oriented wrestling traditions.[14] Phillip Zarrilli is the first Westerner to "rediscover" the existence of the ancient Indian martial art of kalarippayattu. But even his analysis of the combat form is in terms of physical fighting techniques as dance movements, and as an internal alchemy used to improve one's health—not to fight off warring factions or other martial practitioners.[15] Therefore, not only has India's martial culture become diluted but it is virtually extinct.

On the contrary, China has maintained it martial culture as a national treasure. This was done as a political vehicle to project the essence of their culture to the world. In the past twenty to thirty years since the Cultural Revolution, members of China's politburo have investigated their martial traditions. This was effected by insisting (against the will of the masters) that practitioners demonstrate in public and allow video taping of their skills. This permitted the Chinese government to make a catalog of its broad martial culture.[16] As a result, the Chinese government took archaic forms of combat and diluted them into a single, unified martial form known as wu shu.[17] Wu shu combines elements of martial arts, dance and opera with gymnastic overtones, into the formation of a single expression of Chinese culture. Thus, as wu shu, Chinese martial culture is at once more accessible and more easily comprehended by the outside world. One finds little effort made on behalf of the Philippine government in an attempt to preserve their martial culture.

Historically, the classical martial arts of Japan were relatively unknown even to Japanese citizens. To this day the Japanese have been cited as having little knowledge of their true martial heritage.[18] In fact, the samurai tradition disappeared over 300 years ago. Draeger and Smith note that the *bujutsu* (martial arts) forms have been superseded by the *budo* (martial way) forms. Furthermore, even though specific fighting techniques of the *bujutsu* tradition were practiced in a clandestine fashion in Japan.[19] Moreover, while various martial arts are still practiced in Japan today, the actual intensity of feeling a need to kill somebody in a "death-match" as part of a routine test of skills is not found. While this warrior ethos was present in Japan during medieval times it clearly does not exist in contemporary Japanese society.

Indian, Chinese, and Japanese cultures are able to maintain a consistency of information concerning their martial disciplines through the existence of "preserved" textual writings. The Filipinos have no such body of literature. What is found, rather, are a number of writings which have paraphrased common sources which, themselves, are largely inaccurate. Perhaps due to a heightened sense of cultural value placed on scholarship in other Asian countries their martial arts are viewed in a more favorable light.[20] Conversely, as a result of invasion and constant repression of their indigenous beliefs, a general lack of literacy, and a general poor third-world image, Filipinos at large tend to look with disfavor upon their own cultural (and martial) heritage.[21]

It is a positive attitude toward martial culture which has led other Asian countries to further develop and refine their martial arts. This can be seen in the standardization of rank and its corresponding colored-belt designation, the opening of formal martial arts schools for public instruction, and recommended reading of indigenous philosophical works. These elements have further heightened the Indian, Chinese, and Japanese understanding of the warrior worldview which at once involves an intimate synthesis of Eastern philosophy and religion. In the Philippines, however, there is no unified or generally accepted martial arts ranking structure or formal schools of instruction. There is also no major or singular indigenous religious tradition or philosophical ideology that embodies ancient and contemporary Filipino beliefs. What is found, rather, are various syncretic forms of endemic animistic beliefs, Islam, and Catholicism.

Moreover, in the Philippines the individual personal beliefs of an instructor may in fact have no direct relationship, correlation, or extension of a particular system or of the teacher his system is supposedly based upon. Conversely, in countries like India, China, and Japan one finds the imparting of knowledge of an art to generally embrace an entire system of physical skills, philosophy, and in some cases supernatural practices and healing traditions. In these countries the whole of a system is transmitted from teacher to student—the student molding himself to the art—through

established ritualistic practices. This is not the case in the Philippines where the individual is often looked upon as greater than the art, as evidenced by the vast number of systems named after contemporary masters. Such ideographic belief patterns and practices are precisely why there is so much disunity among the various ethnic groups in the Philippines and why the central and northern regions were successfully colonized by way of the "divide-and-conquer" strategy employed by the Spanish conquistadors in the sixteenth century.

The Philippine Archipelago is a melting pot of peoples and cultures. While the evolution of Filipino martial arts may be interpreted by some in terms of ideas assimilated from its Asian neighbors, to do so solely in such terms is naive. As Harding suggests: "When acted upon by external forces a culture will, if necessary, undergo specific changes only to the extent of and with the effect of preserving unchanged its fundamental structure and character."[22] There is presently no single martial arts organization, political faction, ethnic or social integration in the Philippines. However, it is precisely the Filipinos' ability to absorb other cultural traditions without being absorbed that has crafted their martial arts into something essentially and uniquely Filipino.

It can therefore be concluded that while three classifications of Filipino martial arts exists today (i.e., "ancient," "classical," and "modern"), their contemporary practitioners appear to be moving toward completely embracing the "modern" form. The intent of these practitioners to follow the patterns which have unfolded in India, China, and Japan to promote commodified, government sanctioned martial "arts" and sports is apparent in the results of this study. While many of the contemporary masters embody the ethos of the "ancient" Filipino warrior (e.g., the primary use of bladed weapons as opposed to sticks, the possession of amulets and prayers for divine protection in combat, and belief that participation in a "death-match" is the only true indicator of one's skill), the practitioners of the modern systems do not. Therefore, it remains to be seen if the social and political factors in the post modern Philippines will continue to maintain a hold on any evolution of a cohesive unified martial arts ideology which complements its Asian neighbors.

Appendix 1

Generic Terms for the Filipino Art of Weaponry

armas de mano
arnes de mano
arnis
arnis de mano
dalan ti armas
didya
escrima
esgrima
eskrima
estocada
estoque
fraile
garote
kabaroan
kadaanan
kali
kaliradman
kalirongan
pagaradman
pagkalikali
pananandata
pangolisi
saksakan
sinawali

Appendix 2

Styles of Filipino Fighting Techniques

abaniko
abierta
bahad
banda y banda
boca y lobo
bolante
cadena rael
contra compas
cruzada
de cadena
de fondo
de marina
de salon
doblete
estrella bartical
florete
fondo fuerte
lagas
lastiko
layaw
lengua de fuego
media fraile
mizcla contras
ocho-ocho
pluma
redoble
redondo
riterada
rompido
serrada
sinamak
sumbrada
sunkite
tero pisada
tiradin
todosan
uhido
warwok

Appendix 3

Name Classifications of Filipino Martial Arts

1. Systems named after the province in which they developed (i.e., Bicolano arnis; arnis Pangasinan)
2. Systems named after their founder (i.e., Biñas dynamic arnis; kali Ilustrisimo)
3. Systems named after their most distinguishing technical characteristic (i.e., lapunti arnis de abaniko; doblete rapillon)
4. Systems named after their favored fighting range (i.e., Cabales serrada escrima; lameco eskrima)
5. Systems named after their composite styles (i.e., Vee arnis jitsu; Tobosa kali/escrima)
6. Systems named after Filipino national heroes (i.e., Rizal arnis)
7. Systems named after historic places (i.e., Balintawak arnis)
8. Systems named after the weapons of former enemies (i.e., estocada; espada y daga)

Appendix 4

Systems of Filipino Martial Arts

abaniko de sunkite
arnis Escorpizo
arnis Fernandez
arnis Lanada
Balintawak arnis
Balintawak arnis cuentada
Balintawak super cuentada
balsakan
Batangueño serrada
Bayson style
Bicolano arnis
Biñas dynamic arnis
bultong
buno
Cabales serrada escrima
cadena de mano
cinco tero arnis
dama
de campo uno-dos-tres orihinal
de cuerdas escrima
de pluma arnis
derobio eskrima
doblete rapillon
dumog
escrido
gabbo
garong
Giron arnis/escrima
hagibis
hinaplos arnis
indangan eskrima
kali Ilustrisimo
kuntaw lima-lima
kupulubod
La Costa kali
lameco eskrima
lampugan
lapunti arnis de abaniko
Largusa/Villabrille kali
Lastra arnis
layung
lightning scientific arnis
Mena arnis
modern arnis
modern mano-mano
moderno largos
pananandata Mariñas
panantukan
pangamut
pantok
pekiti tirsia kali
purgos
Rigonan-Estalilla kabaroan
Rizal arnis
sagasa
Sayoc kali
siete pares arnis
sikaran
silaga
sinayoup kali
Sulite style
sunkite arnis
talahib
tapado
Tendencia arnis-hilot
Tobosa kali/escrima
tulisan
Vee arnis
Vee arnis jitsu
yaw-yan

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14. Jocano, 1975, p. 70
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16. Zaide, 1979
17. Mercado, 1985
18. Goquingco, 1980
19. Goquingco, 1980
20. Zaide, 1979

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11. Karnow, 1989
12. Ventura, 1992

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Glossary

abakada (Tagalog): a term coined from a, b, k, d (a, ba, ka, da), meaning alphabet. In terms of Filipino martial arts this term can refer to a series of strikes (angles of attack) or sequential forms–the alphabet or building blocks of a system.
abaniko (Tagalog): literally, a fan; a fanning-style strike delivered with a stick
agaw (Tagalog): to snatch; term used to refer to various techniques of disarming
agila (Spanish): the eagle; symbolizes the sixth rank-level in Tobosa kali/escrima
agimat (Tagalog): amulets which are believed to possess supernatural powers of protection
agos (Tagalog): literally to flow. In kuntaw lima-lima, it refers to the concept of going with the force of an opponent's strike.
anito (Tagalog): spirits, spirits with supernatural powers, ancestral spirits
anting-anting (Tagalog): a talisman or charm said to possess the supernatural power of protection for the bearer
arbularyo (Tagalog): a term which denotes a medicine-man
armas de Mano (Spanish): armor or weapons of (or manipulated by) the hands; early name used to describe the practice of Filipino weapon arts
arnes (Spanish): colorful arm trappings worn on the costumes of the *komedya* stage actors
arnis (Tagalog): the "modern" Filipino art of fencing or stick-fighting, developed into a sport after WWII.
arnisador (Tagalog): one who is proficient in the modern martial art of arnis

bahi (Tagalog): a hardwood indigenous to the Philippines which is used in the practice of kali, eskrima, and arnis
balangkas (Tagalog): a framework. A general term used to describe the foundation or structure of various Filipino martial arts
balaraw (Tagalog): ancient dagger, also known as *punyal* and *sundang*
balisong (Visayan): infamous butterfly knife or fan knife developed in Batangas, Philippines. Term comes from root words *bali* (to break) and *sung* (horn), i.e., to break the horn or the song of the horn of the carabao.
barangay (Tagalog): a community of people
bangkaw (Tagalog): a short staff of about four feet in length

barong (Visayan; Maguindanao): a heavy, leaf-shaped sword popular among the Moros of Mindanao and Sulu
barrio (Spanish): a small town or part of a town
baston (Spanish): a cane; used generically as a term referring to the fighting sticks of eskrima and arnis
batalla (Spanish): a battle; also the finale of the *komedya* stage plays
batikan (Visayan): a title connoting an expert or master of eskrima
Baybayin (Tagalog): literally, to spell or to write; ancient written alphabet brought to the Philippines in the third century by Hindu Tamils from Malaysia; also known as Alibata and Abakada
biakid (Baras): the famous kick of sikaran which makes use of a backward spinning motion, which was adopted by taekwondo practitioners in the 1950s
bolo (Spanish): general utility knife found with varying characteristics such as *malapad* (wide), *matulis* (sharp, pointed), used in *bolo* battalions during World War II
Bothoan (Bicol): legendary school of kali said to have been established on Panay by ten Bornean *datus* in the twelfth-century
budbud (Tagalog): fine rattan which is woven in strands to cover the scabbards of *kris*
bugso (Tagalog): to blast; refers to the blast-style disarming method of Biñas dynamic arnis
busog (Tagalog): the traditional long bow of the northern Philippine tribes

daganan (Tausug): the terms for the handle of the *kris*, often decorated with mother-of-pearl
dakip-diwa (Tagalog): the Filipino warrior's mind-set when engaged in combat
dalawang (Tagalog): double; used to describe a movement or system which makes use of two weapons concurrently
dalawang yantok (Tagalog): a system of employing two sticks for self-defense
datu (Tagalog): a chief, Moro chieftain, or tribal chieftain
disarma (Spanish): techniques of disarming
diwata (Visayan): *see anito*
doble baston (Spanish): the art or use of two canes, sticks, or clubs for self-defense
doble kara (Spanish): literally, double-faced or double-dealing; the concurrent twirling of two sticks
Doce Pares Association (Spanish): twelve pairs; oldest organization of Filipino martial arts, founded in 1932 by Venancio Bacon in Cebu. The Doce Pares Club is currently being run by the Cañete family.
doce tero (Spanish): the twelve strikes or angles of attack found in various systems of kali, eskrima, and arnis

esgrima (Spanish): a Spanish term for the art of fencing
eskrima (Tagalog): the "classical" Filipino art of stick-fighting (e.g., fencing with sticks)
eskrimador (Tagalog): one who is proficient in the self-defense techniques of eskrima
espada y daga (Spanish): the style of eskrima or arnis fighting which employs the use of the sword and dagger
espiritista (Tagalog): a psychic healer or surgeon who operates without making incisions
enganyo (Tagalog): a feinting technique or faking maneuver

engkanto (Tagalog): a charm, enchantment, or spell; also a fairy or spirit that can enchant or charm people

gilas (Tagalog): gallantry; showing what one is made of; representative of the warrior's unison of mind, body, and spirit
gunting (Tagalog): from *ginunting*, meaning scissors; term used to describe various techniques of simultaneous parrying and nerve-center striking
guro (Spanish): a generic term for an instructor, sometimes refering to a master

hangin (Tagalog): literally wind; symbolizes the final rank-level in Tobosa kali/escrima which allows the practitioner to open and operate a kali/escrima school
hari (Tagalog): a king or ruler; used to identify the champion in the *pitak* competition of sikaran, and thus the headmaster of the art
hilot (Tagalog): traditional Filipino healing system of massage and bone-setting
Hukbalahap (Tagalog): short for Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon, or the People's Army Against Japan
humay (Visayan): literally rice; symbolizes the forth rank-level found in Tobosa kali/escrima

Indio (Spanish): a term used by the Spanish to refer to the indigenous inhabitants of the Philippines

jihad (Arabic): Islamic holy war waged against Christians. Those who die in the struggle are pronounced *shahid* (martyrs) and are assured a place in *sulga* (heaven).
juramentado (Spanish): the term ascribed to the Islamic religious rite of the Moros of Sulu and Mindanao running and decapitating non-Muslims in their path

kaingin (Tagalog): soil cultivation or preparation of land for planting by burning out trees and weeds
kali: Filipino martial art believed to have been developed and taught in the legendary Bothoan school. The art is primarily based in the use of edged weapons and holds direct roots in Indonesian and Malaysian silat systems. The term is belied to have originated either with Kali, the Indian Goddess of war, with Kalimantan, the country where the ten *datus* came from, or from the use of the *kalis* sword.
kalis (Tagalog): a serpentine sword used among the Moros of Mindanao and Sulu; also spelled *keris* and *kris*
kalista (Tagalog): one who is a practitioner of the martial art of kali
kamagong (Tagalog): a hard wood similar to ebony found in the Philippines and used as combat sticks
kapatiran (Tagalog): literally, brotherhood. A term often used to refer to an organization or association of martial artist practitioners, such as Kapatiran Sikaran (Sikaran Brotherhood).
kasangkapan (Tagalog): a general term used to classify tools
katawan (Tagalog): the human body; term also used to refer to specific disarming techniques of Biñas dynamic arnis and specific grappling techniques of Cabales serrada escrima
Katipunan (Tagalog): nineteenth-century Filipino revolutionary movement founded by

Andres Bonifacio. Term means "brotherhood," and is the accepted abbreviation for Ang Kataastaasan Kagalanggalangang Katipunan na Anak ng Bayan, "The Most Honorable Association of the Sons of the People."

kawayan (Visayan): literally, bamboo; symbolizes the second rank-level in Tobosa kali/escrima

kidlat (Tagalog): lightning; a lightning-style of disarming in Biñas dynamic arnis

komedya (Tagalog): from the Spanish, *comedia.* A popular Tagalog drama, also called Moromoro because of the preponderance of the Muslim vs. Catholic theme. Used as propaganda by the Spanish friars to promote Catholicism and foster a hatred of Islam.

laban-laro (Tagalog): to fight and play; a series of combat-oriented weapon drills developed by Edgar Sulite and taught in his lameco eskrima system

langka (Tausug): form of martial dance among the Tausug tribe of the southern Philippines, encompassing various styles such as *langka-silat, langka-pansak, langka-lima, langka-kuntaw,* and *langka-saway*

larga mano (Spanish): long hand; used to describe the long range styles and techniques found within Filipino martial arts

lastiko (Tagalog): elastic; term used to describe the style of weaving the body back and forth while executing techniques in arnis

librito (Spanish): a small book; booklets which contain prayers in Latin, Spanish, and various Philippine languages

lubid (Tagalog): a rope used as a weapon in various Filipino martial arts

maglarawan (Tagalog): term used to describe the acquired skills in visualization.

mano-mano (Spanish): hand-to-hand; term used to generically classify the empty-hand techniques of various systems of arnis and eskrima

Maragtas: the written history of Panay Island said to have been written in 1250 by Datu Sumakwel

mandirigma (Tagalog): fighting man or an experienced combatant; a warrior

medio (Spanish): medium; a term used to describe the fighting techniques employed at a medium range

Mestizo (Spanish): a Filipino of mixed Spanish blood

Moro (Spanish): term ascribed to Muslim Filipinos by the Spanish who thought they looked similar to the Moors of Africa

Moromoro (Spanish): the name for a specific type of komedya stageplay which features the triumph of Christianity of the rebellious Muslim warriors of the Philippines

naga (Tagalog): mythical snake, serpent or dragon whose shape is the model for the blade motif of the *kris*

ocho-ocho (Spanish): eight-eight. In arnis, it refers to the figure-eight motion as made with a weapon

odto (Cebuano): high noon; deadly snake-venom poison used to coat the points of projectile weapons

orasyon (Tagalog): from the Spanish term *oracion,* meaning prayers; words said to empower a warrior with supernatural powers in combat

owak (Visayan): literally, a crow; symbolizes the fifth rank-level in Tobosa kali/escrima

paligitan (Tagalog): the circle-fight in kuntaw lima-lima where opponents enter a circle and attempt through fighting to knock their opponent out of the boundaries

pananandata (Tagalog): a generic term used to describe a system of weaponry

panday (Tagalog): a blacksmith

pangalawang guro (Tagalog): term denoting the second level or advance instructor's degree of Cabales serrada escrima

pangamut (Visayan): the martial art said to have been developed by Rajah Lapulapu in the sixteenth-century

pang-unang guro (Tagalog): term denoting the first level or basic instructor's degree of Cabales serrada escrima

pangulong guro (Tagalog): term denoting the master instructor's degree of Cabales serrada escrima

pasunod (Tagalog): a passing action with the hand

pagtatanggol sa sarili (Tagalog): term to denote techniques of self-defense

patay (Tagalog): dead or lifeless; name given to *anting-antings* bought from peddlers in Quiapo, which are acquired without prayer or blessing

patayan (Tagalog): the so-called "death-match" which finds two practitioners of the Filipino martial arts engaged in a test of skill where only one man will stand victorious and alive at its culmination

pencak-silat (Indonesian): the Indonesian art of attack and defense

pesilat (Malay): one who is a practitioner of silat

pitak (Tagalog): a circle fight in sikaran in which opponents attempt to kick one another out of a circle with a circumference of twenty feet

rajah (Sanskrit): a king or tribal leader; later adopted as a term denoting a master of kali or silat

riterada (Spanish): to retreat; a retreating footwork or defensive maneuver used in various Filipino martial arts

sabong (Tagalog): a fighting gamecock; also the identifying symbol of Bakbakan International

sampaguita (Tagalog): the national flower of the Philippines and name of an empty-hand form found in kuntaw lima-lima

sandata (Tagalog): any class of weapon, arms, or ammunition; term used to classify the weapons used in various Filipino martial arts

sandugo (Tagalog): a blood compact, such as the historic one in Bohol between Rajah Sikatuna and Miguel Lopez de Legaspi

sangga (Tagalog): generic term used to classify various blocking techniques.

sangga at patama (Tagalog): term used to describe a training exercise which employs give-and-take actions between an attacker and defender

sayaw (Tagalog): a dance. The term also classifies both weapon and empty-hand forms in various Filipino martial arts.

sharif (Arabic): a Muslim title of respect

sinawali (Tagalog): to weave; the style of double-stick fighting from the Macabebe of Pampanga which utilizes interweaving motions of the sticks

solo baston (Spanish): use of a single weapon such as a cane, stick, or club for self-defense

sultan (Arabic): an individual who represents the highest religious and political authority within the Islamic religion

sultanate (Arabic): designated area over which the power of a *sultan* resides

sumbrada (Tagalog): derives from *sumbra,* meaning shadow or shade; term used to define a drill in which one partner "shadows" or follows the movements of another in a one-for-one manner

suntok (Tagalog): a punch; the term is generally used, however, in reference to a punch executed with the fist held in a vertical position

suntukan (Tagalog): to punch; term used to classify the system of Filipino boxing or grouping of various punching techniques

tadyakan (Tagalog): to stomp; term used to describe various stomping, kicking, and sweeping techniques

talarih manok (Tagalog): literally gamecock; symbolizes the third rank-level in Tobosa kali/escrima

Tanghalan ng Sandata (Tagalog); a hall of weapons; the school where the leaders of the Philippine Revolution practiced eskrima

trankadas (Tagalog): a generic term used to classify joint-locking techniques of various Filipino martial arts

tulisan (Tagalog): a bandit, also meaning pointed; a term used to identify the knife-fighting sub-system of kali Ilustrisimo

tuhan (Indonesian): God; a spiritual leader; also used to denote one who has attained the highest level in kali or silat (i.e., a grandmaster)

vintas (Maguindanao; Ilokano): dugout canoes used by early Muslim traders and pirates of the southern Philippines.

yantok at daga (Tagalog): the style of eskrima or arnis fighting employing the use of the stick-and-dagger.

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Index

abaniko de sunkite 260
Abella, Jesus 258, 260–61
Abubakr, ul-Hasin 38
Acosta, Atanacio 287, 288
Aeta 32, 33, 35, 72, 107, 128
agimat 69, 70, 72
Aginaldo, Emilio 52, 53–54, 55
Aglipay, Gregorio 164
aikido 224, 238
Alcuzar, Gerardo 59
All-Japan Karate Association 187
American Judo and Jujutsu Federation 299
amok 79, 80
animism 72, 73, 104, 343
anito 73–5, 99
anting-anting 24–5, 57, 69, 70, 73, 76–8, 80, 81, 103, 161–62, 204, 209, 227, 233
Apila 76
Aquino, Dionisio 187
arakyo 237, 239
Araw ng Kagitingan 107
arbularyo 72
Arnis America Organization 300
arnis Escorpizo 156–63, 317, 318–19
arnis Lanada 66, 217–27, 300, 330–31
Arnis Philippines 27, 65, 221
Arranguez, Manassah 260
Ataneo de Manila 50
Ati-atihan 35
Atienza, Francisco 46
Atillo, Crispulo 62
Atillo, Felipe 62
Australian Ju-Jutsu Federation 177
Australian Karate Organization 177
Azes, Don Jose de 50

Baaclo, Billy 260
Babao, Narrie 63
Bacolod Arnis Club 59
Bacon, Venancio 57, 266–68, 270, 275
Badjao 32, 129
bagakay 126, 239
Bagani 105
Baginda, Rajah 38
Bagobo 70, 75–76, 123
Bahala Na Club 199–200
Bakbakan International 61, 90–7, 173–78, 245, 248, 250, 251, 253
Balagtas (Francisco Baltazar) 49
balaraw 37, 123
Balintawak arnis 57, 174, 178, 248, 266–69
Balintawak arnis cuentada 266–75, 330, 332–33
Balintawak Self-Defense Club 58, 268
Balintawak super cuentada 260
balisong 58, 122–23, 239–40, 243, 244
Baliwanen 105
balsakan 309
Banay, Bernardo 165
bangkaw 125, 132, 166
Bantugan, Prince 113, 114

barong 37, 44, 55, 79, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 203, 204, 206, 313
barote 130
baston 125, 143, 158
Bataan "Death March" 107, 159
Bataugong, Sri 39
Bathala 83
Bayson, Marcelino 257, 260
Bayson style 260
Bendian (Tchungas) war dance 113
Beng Kiam Athletic Association 247
Bergonia, Dalmacio 193
Beyer Wave Migration Theory 22–3, 32–3, 34, 116
Binabayani festival 107
binalo 127
Biñas dynamic arnis 142–47, 311, 317, 320–21
Biñas, Herminio B. 140–47
binusloran 127
Black Cat Self-Defense Club 60
Blanco, Ramon 51
Bodhidharma 308
bolo 48, 55, 117, 118, 122, 140, 160, 197, 206, 207, 230, 313
bolo batallion 56, 122, 142, 165
Bonabon, Inocente 174
Bonifacio, Andres 51, 52, 122
Borja, Arsenio de 61
Bothoan 36, 80, 308, 310
boxing, Western 150, 169, 228, 252, 269, 289, 298
Buhat, Mauro 229
bultong 309
Bundok, Julian 192
buno 49
buntot-pagi 121, 126
busog 37, 128
Bustillo, Richard 148, 199, 200
buteng 309

Cabahug, Pablicito 257, 258
Cabales, Angel 61, 83, 148–55, 171, 191, 198–99, 204, 235
Cabales Escrima Academy 153–55
Cabales serrada escrima 148–55, 198, 199, 317, 322–24
Caballero, Jose 256–57, 261, 262
Caburnay, Felimon 61, 260
Caburnay, Ondo 61
cadena de mano 198
Cagayan Man 34
Cagayan Uprising 47
Cañete, Ciriaco 60, 64, 222, 260
Cañete, Dionisio 24, 64, 222, 260
Cañete, Eddie 252
Cañete, Eulogio 58, 267–68
Carunggay, Tatang 174
Cayabyab, Serilo 156, 157, 159
Cebu Eskrima Association 62
Chang San-feng 308
Charlemagne 110
Chavez, Amador 59, 143
Chavez Arnis Group 59, 143
Cheng Ho 110
Chiuten, Johnny 57
Chow, William K. 289–90
Choy li fut kung-fu 246
Chu, C. K. 299
Chua, Ernie 174
Chua, Jose 246
cinco tero arnis 16, 157, 195, 220, 248, 291
Co, Alex 173, 246, 249
communitas 92–4
Confederacy of Maniland 36
Corcuera, Hurtado de 110
Cortes, Pedro 203
Cuba, Esabello 289

Dagahoy Revolt 47
dakip-diwa 81–2, 115
Dalisay, Rajah 110
dama 309
Dambana ng Kagitingan 107
Dantes, Roland 231, 259–60
Darago 76
Datimbang 114
datus, legend of ten 35–7, 310
de campo uno-dos-tres orihinal 256, 260, 261
de cuerdas escrima 149–50
de pluma arnis 260
death match, see *patayan*
Dedal, Tony 178
Del Pilar, Gregorio 54, 55
Del Pilar, Marcario 50
Delanganan, Datu 165
Diego, Antonio 98–9, 178, 209, 249, 262
dikin 239
diwata, see anito
Dizon, Felicisimo 139, 149–50, 204
doblete rapillon 60
Doce Pares Association 58, 61, 62, 149, 170, 222, 260, 268
Doce Pares de Francia 110
Dumagat 309
dumog 174, 175, 309
Durex Self-Defense Club 59

engkanto 74–5
Ensong, Tatay 60
Escorpizo, Carlos 156–63
escrido 60
Espaniola, Esmile 295
espiritista 72
Estalilla, Eusebio 164
Estalilla, Ramiro A. 58, 164
Estalilla, Ramiro U. 164–172, 329
ethos 25, 69–83, 85, 96, 105, 133, 341–44

fal-feg 127
fencing, Western 49, 50, 61, 164, 317
Fernandez, Jose 228
Fernandez, Napolean 61–2
Filipino-American War 54–5, 137
flexible weapons 71, 118, 126
Florente at Laura 49
folk dance, martial 104–05, 106, 111–115
folk drama, martial 104–05, 109–11
folk festival, martial 104–09, 111

gabbo 309
Gaje, Leo T. 62, 235, 238, 258, 259, 261, 299, 300
Galang, Ray 173–81, 208, 334
Gallano, Gary 224
Gallano, Remondo 277–78
Gallarpe, Ben 175
Garcia, Pedro 187
garong 309
garote 125
Gavileño, Ambrosio 238
Geronimo, Cipriano 182, 185–86, 190
Geronimo, Jimmy 337
Geronimo, Meliton 167, 182–90, 247
gilas 80–1
Giron arnis/escrima 191–200, 311, 317, 325
Giron, Leo M. 152, 171, 191–200, 235
Goiti, Martin de 43
golok 123
Gonzales, Latino 217, 238
guham 74
Gyabros, Narciso 59

hagibis 173–81, 310, 330, 334
hataw 94–95
hawakan 239
hawrangdo 66
head-hunting 33, 113, 118, 120
hilot 72, 149, 180, 276, 279, 281–85
hinaplos arnis 288
Homo erectus 33–4
Homo sapien 34
Hong Sing Athletic Association 246
hsing-i kung-fu 66
Hu Tuan Hai 253
Hua Kun, Alfonso Ang 249
Huks, the 56
Humabon, Rajah 39–40
Hung-gar kung-fu 246

Ibanag 309
Ibanez, Tinong 270
Igorot 32, 33, 113, 124, 131, 161, 309
Igufao 32, 309
Ihara, Matt 295
Ilustrisimo, Antonio 64, 98–9, 139, 201–09, 233, 249, 255, 259, 260, 261, 262, 314
Ilustrisimo, Melicio 255
imago mundi 103
impact weapons 48, 71, 118, 125
indangan eskrima 269

Inosanto, Dan 13, 63, 99, 138, 148, 191, 199, 200, 254, 266, 277, 282, 310–11
International Arnis Federation 65
International Kuntaw Association 215
International Taekwondo Federation 175
Isneg 113

Java Man 33
Jay, Wally 299
jihad 44, 55, 78–80
ju-jutsu 174–75, 178, 187, 246–47, 276, 279, 285, 296, 298
judo 59, 61, 63, 173, 174–75, 178, 187, 228, 231, 232, 276, 278–79, 281, 285, 289, 298
Junio, Benito 192
Junio, Fructuso 192
juramentado 55, 79–80, 120

Kabungsuwan, Sharif 37, 45
Kagayhaan festival 105
kaji kumi karate 290–91, 292–93
Kalagan 106
kalaki 74, 115
kalarippayattu 342
kalasag 40, 129–30
Kali Association of the Philippines 64
kali Ilustrisimo 66, 175, 178, 181, 201–09, 249, 260, 262, 311, 313, 314
Kalinga 32, 33, 113
Kalinga war dance 113
kalis, see *kris*
kamenglan 113
kampilan 37, 40, 118, 119–20, 123, 125, 132, 313
Kanduli, Rajah 43
Kapatiran Sikaran-Arnis 186
kapulubod 309
kara-ho kempo 289
Karate Brotherhood of the Philippines 187, 247
Karate Federation of the Philippines 252
Kathakali 241
Katipunan, the 24–5, 51–2, 122
Kee, Hwang 188, 189
keris, see *kris*
Kinabayo festival 106
klewang 123
Kobayashi, Fusakichi 187
Kodokan Institute 174, 278–79
komedya 45, 49, 110–11
Kondo, Koichi 187, 189
Korean Soo Bahk Do Association 187
kris 37, 44, 45, 55, 75, 79, 80, 118, 121–22, 310, 313
Kudarat, Sultan 45–6, 109, 111
kun-tao 35, 112, 210, 211, 310
kuntaw lima-lima 210–16, 330, 335
Kuraldal, see komedya
Kyokushin-kai karate 63, 66, 184, 289, 290

La Costa kali 99–102
La Liga Filipina 51, 52
Labangon Fencing Club 57
lai-kai 112
Lakanduli, Rajah 43
Lam Lao Kiam 247
Lamay, Sri Bantug 39
lameco eskrima 254–65, 313, 315
lampugan 309
lanab 127
Lañada, Carlito 63, 210–16, 335
Lanada, Porferio 217–27, 235, 238–39, 330–31
land-bridges 32
langka dances 112–13
langka-kuntaw 35, 112
langka-lima 112
langka-pansak 112
langka-sayaw 112–13
langka-silat 66, 112, 309
lantaka 128
Lapu-Lapu Arnis Affecianados 143
Lapulapu, Rajah 23–4, 39–40, 109, 133, 308
Lapunti Self-Defense Club 61
lapunti arnis de abaniko 61, 260
Largusa, Ben T. 171, 191, 295, 310
Lasola, Florencio 63
Lastra arnis 227
latigo 126, 239
Lawanen 114
layung 309
Lee Tin Chan 290
Legaspi, Miguel Lopez de 41, 42, 45, 106
Lema, Benjamin Luna 58, 64, 222, 228–234, 326–27
Lengson, Guillermo 248, 251–52
Lengson, Lorenso 228
Leon, Perfecto de 58, 123
libritos 74
Lightning Arnis Club 58, 228, 230
lightning scientific arnis 228–34, 317, 326–27
Limahong 44
liminality 90, 92–4, 103, 109
Linambay, see komedya
Lonzaga, Bonifacio 287, 288
Lopez-Jeana, Graciano 50
lubid 126, 239
Lucay Lucay, Ted 200
Luna, Antonio 50
Luna, Juan 50

MacArthur, Gen. Douglas 55–6, 98, 165, 276
Mackey, Jerome 238, 298
Mactan, battle of 23–4, 39–41
Magdalo of Cavite 52
Magdiwang of Noveleta 52
Magellan, Ferdinand 23, 31, 39–40, 43
magsabil 79
Magsaysay, Raymond 56
Maguindanao 32, 37, 70, 106, 114
Makatunaw 35, 36
Malikol Jian 114
Mamalu 37
Mamar, Romeo 60
Mamunes, Magzinido 165
mana 74, 88
mananasal 122
Mandapak, Senfroso 156, 159
Mandarangan 76
Mandaya 106
mandirigma 40, 45, 46, 69–83, 114, 116, 132, 133
Mangal, Datu 39
Mangcal, Alfredo 64, 222
Manobo 32, 33, 76, 105, 106, 309
manuju 80
Maragtas 23, 3537, 308
Maranao 32, 70, 114, 129, 309
Maranga, Timoteo 63, 64, 222, 260
Marcelo, Ingkong Leon 237
Marcos, Ferdinand 56
Marikudo, Datu 35
Mariñas, Amante P. 62, 170, 224–25, 235–44, 299, 300, 328
Mark, Gin Foon 299
Mena arnis 60, 178
Mena, Jose 60, 64, 204, 222
Mendoza, Donald 316
Mifune, Kyuzo 278–279
modern arnis 65, 248, 259
moderno largos 258, 261
monkey boxing 246
Moors 45, 106
Moro style 288–89
Moromoro, see *komedya*
muay Thai 62
Muhammed, Sultan 203
Murong 114

Nakae, Kiyose 298
napi 79
National Arnis Association of the Philippines 62, 63–4, 141, 223
Navales, Hortencio 64, 222
Navarro, Carlos 62
Negrito, see Aeta
Negros Occidental Arnis Federation 141
ngo cho kun kung-fu 66, 246–47
Ngoi, Alex 222, 225, 330–31
Nicoy, Rajah 43
Nolasco, Magdaleño 60

Okazaki, Henry 289
Olavides, Ireneo 260
olisi-palad 125
Oolimbama Arnis Club 63
oral history 21–2, 307–08
orasyon 24, 69, 70, 72, 73–6, 80, 81, 99–103, 162, 209, 233
Orlando, Rudy 295

Oyama, Masutatsu 184, 246, 256, 290
pa kua kung-fu 299
Paez, Artemio 62
pakil 37, 130
Palaris Revolt 47
pamor 121
pana 37, 128, 166, 313
panabas 124
pananandata Mariñas 170, 227, 235–44, 317, 328
panantukan 174, 181
pangamut 39
pantok 309
panyo 126, 313
parang latok 124
parang sabil 78–9
Park, Yong Man 175, 176
patayan 77, 80, 98–103, 137, 208, 341
patibong 166
Pattong war dance 113
pattong 79
Pecate, Candido 167, 174, 222
Pecate, Florencio 64
Pedoy, Braulio 295
Pedoy School of Escrima 286
Peking Man 33
pekiti tirsia kali 62, 258, 261, 299
pencak-silat 66, 206, 309
Peralta, Macario 230, 276
Perez, Geronimo 110
Philippine Amateur Athletic Association 000
Philippine Ameteur Judo Association 174, 187
Philippine Arnis Confederation 62
Philippine Constabulary 55, 140, 142, 143
Philippine Olympic Committee 65
Philippine Professional Arnis Association 222
Philippine Revolution 50, 51–2
Philippine Sports Commission 000
pilapok 236
Pilipina Judo-Karate Association 247
pingga 125, 237, 239
pinute 122
Pira, Panday 43–4
Ponce, Mariano 50
praying mantis kung-fu 66, 246, 299
Presas, Milagdo 165
Presas, Remy 65, 143, 178, 248, 266, 310
Principe Raynaldo 110
projectile weapons 71, 118, 126
protectants 71, 118, 128
Pueblos, Lowell 259
Punta Princesa Eskrima Club 62
purgos 309
Puti, Datu 35–6

Quezon, Manuel Luis 56

ranking structure 90–5, 341
rapillon arnis 249
Red Lightning Club 248
Revillar, Dentoy 61, 148, 155, 198
Reyes, Rufino 206
Ricketts, Christopher 175–76, 178, 209, 245–53
Rigonan, Don Mariano 164
Rigonan-Estalilla kabaroan 58, 164–72, 317, 329
rites of passage 90–103, 112, 308
Rizal, Jose 50–1, 128, 164
Romo, Epifanio 209, 259, 260
Romo, Islao 139
Romo, Pedring 57
Roque, Bralio 165
Roque, Florencio 60
Roxas, Manuel A. 56
Saavedra, Teodoro 62, 139
sabong 96–7
sacred time and space 87–9, 108–09
sagasa 66, 176, 245–53, 310, 330, 336
Sagayan war dance 113–14
Saint Michael 78
Salazar, Simon de Anda y 47–8
Salcedo, Juan de 44
Samahan sa Arnis ng Pilipinas 59, 60
Samal 32, 33, 35, 112, 120, 121, 129, 132, 309
Sanchez, Snookie 295
Sandoval, Predro 205
Sandugo festival 106
sandugo (blood compact) 41
Santo Niño 73
Santos, Jack 282
Sarmiento, Max 61, 148, 198
Say-yam 113
Sayar 82
Sea Dyaks 23, 35
Seven-Years War 47
shahid 79
Shito-ryu karate 210
Shorin-ryu karate 210, 217, 238, 247, 276, 279
Shotokan karate 269
sibat 37, 40, 127, 166
siete pares arnis 222
sikaran 59, 61, 66, 167, 177, 181, 182–90, 247, 310, 330, 337
Sikaran-Arnis Brotherhood 187
Sikatuna, Rajah 41, 106
silaga 309
silak 310
Silang, Diego 47–8
Silang, Gabriela 48
silat 27, 37, 46, 74, 112, 309–10
Silongan, Datu 45
sinayoup kali 288–89
Sinkil, see *komedya*
Sinulog 35, 60
Sinulog sa Tanjay 107
Sioco 44
sisidlan 128
slash and thrust weapons 71, 118–24
small circle jujitsu 299
social structure 25, 34, 38, 84–7
socialization 84–95, 105, 107–08
Soliman, Rajah 43
Solomon, Francisco 187
songil 127
Spanish-American War 53–4, 122
Subingsubing, Telesporo 288–89
sugob 127
Sulayman, Rajah 36
sulga 79
Sulite, Edgar 138, 178, 226, 254–89, 315
Sulite, Helacrio 255, 257
Sulite, Luis 255
Sulite style 255
Sulite, Timoteo 255
Sumakwel, Datu 23, 36
sumpit 37, 127–28, 313
sunkite arnis 174
symbolism 89–103, 111–12, 113, 114, 125, 130, 132

tabak maliit 125
Taboada, Bobby 266–75, 332–33
Taboada, Sergio 266, 269
Tabon cave 34, 103
Tabuk 33
Tabuwanay 37
taekwondo 175, 188, 269
tagbanwa 129
taguban 122
tai chi chuan 253, 289, 290, 299
Talag, Ernie 175
talangan 128
talibong 123–24, 160, 162
taming 37, 113, 129
Tanghalan ng Sandata 50
tapado 60
Tasaday 106
tatak bungo 96, 97
Tausug 32, 35, 112, 120, 121, 122, 132
T'boli 105–106
T'boli tribal festival 105–06
Tendencia arnis-hilot 276–85, 338
Tendencia, Sam 276–85, 338
Tierney, Dennis 224–26
tinikol 127
Tinoso, Don Juan 110
Tipace, Deogracias 277, 278
Tirad Pass 54
Tiruray 32, 70, 106
tjakalele 310
Tobosa kali/escrima 286–95, 313, 316
Tobosa, Maximo 286–87
Tobosa, Paul 316
Tobosa, Reymond 235, 286–95, 299
Tobosa School of Kali/Escrima 286, 291
Tobosa, Teofisto 289, 295
Toh 119
Tohei, Koichi 175
Toledo, Santiago 193

Toledo, Semeon 157
Tominan-sa-Rugang, Sultan 114
Tondo School of Arnis 60
Tornedo Garote Self-Defense Club 60
Torres, Robert 224–26, 300
Tortal, Jerson 143, 261
Treaty of Paris 53
tres personas arnis 63
Tres Personas Arnis de Mano Association 63
Tsing Hua Athletic Association 246
Tupas, Rajah 36
Tydings-McDuffie Act 56

Ubo 106
ukkil 122
United Pilipino Martial Arts Association of Hawaii 294–95
Urduja, Princess 109–10

varmannie 298
Vee arnis jitsu 227, 296–303, 330, 339–40
Velez, Chito 274, 275
Velez, Teofilo 269, 270, 274, 275
Venalcante, Eddie 246
Ver, Fabian 62
Vergara, Flaviano 193, 194, 196
Villabrille, Floro 83, 204, 288, 289, 295, 310
Villalobos, Ruy Lopez de 31, 41
Villasin, Jose 270–71, 274
Viñas, Jose 141, 143
Visitacion, Florendo 62, 239, 296–303
Visitacion, Marcos 297
Vito, Lito 248

weapons, typology of 116–31
white crane kung-fu 246
Wiley, Mark V. 318–19, 320–21, 322–24
wing chun kung-fu 299
World Eskrima Kali-Arnis-Federation 64–5
worldview 69–83, 85, 96, 104, 105, 133
wrestling, Western 61, 63, 150, 232, 298
wu shu 342

Yakan 120, 121
Yambao, Placido 23, 58, 59, 237–38, 310
Ybañez, Elmer 326–27
yantok 125, 239, 240–41, 243
yaw-yan 61, 227, 310
yo-yo 128
Yu, Byong 188, 189

Photo Credits

Sources:	Page Numbers:
Carlos Aldrete-Phan	213–15, 302, 335
Arjee Enterprises	58–9, 63 *(right)*, 111, 117 *(right)*, 174, 176–77, 179, 181, 202–03, 220, 259, 265 *(top)*, 297, 300, 334
Bahala Na	192–93, 195–99, 324–25
Bakbakan International	91, 93, 95, 97, 204–06, 208, 248, 250–52, 255, 260, 336
Chuck Cadell	151, 153–54
CFW Enterprises	263, 265 *(bottom)*, 298, 315
Ramiro U. Estalilla, Jr.	165–66, 169
Halford E. Jones	88, 117 *(left)*, 223–26
Michael Maliszewski	82, 100–02
Amante P. Mariñas	237, 239, 241–43, 328
Alan McLuckie	61, 149, 152, 155
National Bookstores, Inc.	50, 51, 52, 54, 133
Philippine Department of Tourism	42 *(top)*, 106, 107, 108, 113
Oscar Ratti	40, 43, 46, 47, 48, 110, 123, 313, 317, 330
David R Smith	141, 145–46, 339–40
Edgar G. Sulite	57, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 76, 218, 229, 230, 231, 233, 256, 257, 258, 262, 264, 267 *(bottom)*, 268, 270, 314
Bobby Taboada	267 *(top)*, 269, 271–72, 274, 332–33
Sam Tendencia	278, 283
Teofisto Tobosa	287–88, 291, 295, 316
The University Museum	119–22, 124, 129, 130–31

Florendo M. Visitacion	240, 299, 301, 303
Mark V. Wiley	42 *(bottom)*, 73, 75, 77 *(left)*, 87, 98–9, 127, 157–58, 160, 167–68, 171, 183–86, 189–90, 207, 219, 221–22, 232, 247, 249, 253, 277, 280–81, 318–23, 326–27, 329, 331, 337–38
Mike Young	284–85, 290
U.S. National Archives	77 *(right)*

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